HABEEB AKANDE

A TASTE of HONEY

SEXUALITY AND EROTOLOGY IN ISLAM

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A TASTE OF HONEY provides a scholarly exposition on the prominent place that sexuality and erotology enjoyed in traditional Islam. The book is divided into two parts; part one presents a critical examination of sexual ethics and part two consists of a concise treatise on the art of seduction and lovemaking.

The central aim of this book argues that Islam is a sexually enlightened religion which teaches that sensuality should not be devoid of spirituality. The book also argues that the loss of sacred sensuality afflicting modern society can be reclaimed by a revival of the classic erotological tradition.

Drawing upon the Qur'ān, Hadith and traditional erotological literature, the book follows the style and composition of classic Eastern and Afro-Arab love texts like the *Kama Sutra* and Jalāl ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī's erotic treatises. *A Taste of Honey* is a thought-provoking work on a highly sensitive, yet extremely important subject.

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BOOK SYNOPSIS

A study of sexual love and the art of lovemaking from a religious perspective.

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A TASTE *of* HONEY

SEXUALITY AND EROTOLOGY IN ISLAM

HABEEB AKANDE

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"This is my faith as well as my ancestors' and the
profession of my father before me – the faith of the lovers
and the religion of the beloved."

JALĀL AD-DĪN AṢ-ṢUYUṬĪ

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Transliteration Key

The transliteration convention used throughout this book represents the Arabic script as follows:

CONSONANTS:

ء	ʾ		د	d		ض	ḍ		ك	k
ب	b		ذ	dh		ط	ṭ		ل	l
ت	t		ر	r		ظ	ẓ		م	m
ث	th		ز	z		ع	ʿ		ن	n
ج	j		س	s		غ	gh		هـ	h
ح	ḥ		ش	sh		ف	f		و	w
خ	kh		ص	ṣ		ق	q		ي	y

Short vowels:	ـَ	a	ـُ	u	ـِ	i
Long vowels:	ـَا	ā	ـُو	ū	ـِي	ī
Dipthongs:	ـَو	aw	ـَي	ay		

ﷺ An invocation of God's blessings and peace upon the Prophet Muḥammad: "May God's blessings and peace be upon him."

﵁ "May God be pleased with him," often said after the names of saintly people.

﵇ "Upon whom be peace", often said after a Prophet's name other than Muḥammad.

The definite article is rendered as *al-* before 'moon' letters, thus *al-qamar* remains *al-qamar*, but it is assimilated to the following letter if it is a 'sun' letter, and so *al-shams* is rendered *ash-shams*. The *tā' al-marbūṭah* is represented by a final *h*.

Introduction

ALL PRAISE IS due to Allah who placed the love of women in the hearts of men, and the love of men in the hearts of women. Glory be to Him who has made the act of intimacy a means to receive Divine reward. I exalt the One who created the pleasures of Paradise[1] for the believers to enjoy eternally. I witness now as I will, God-willing, at the hour of my death, that there is no god but the One God (Allah) and Muḥammad the son of ʿAbdullāh, is the last and final Messenger of Allah. May Allah bless him, his family, Companions and those who seek guidance.

Sexuality is a constant theme in Islam's sacred sources, as it is essential for the perpetuation of life, physical health and personal fulfilment. Affirming human sexuality as a gift from Allah, the Qur'ān mentions that from amongst the Creator's signs *"for those who reflect"* are the spouses He created for human beings so that they will have *"love and compassion"* for one another.[2] Informing his followers of the Divine rewards of sexual love,[3] the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, "In your [act of] sexual intercourse there is an act of charity."[4] In another instance he said, "The best of you are those who are best towards their wives."[5] And "When a man has sex with his wife, he should strive to satisfy her. Then, when he fulfils his need, he should not hurry [in withdrawing] until she fulfils her need."[6] Inspired by such prophetic traditions and the works of ancient erotologists, a literary genre dedicated to the study and description of sexual love and lovemaking developed in ninth century Arabia. The discipline known as *ʿilm al-bāh* flourished spectacularly in the Muslim world prior to its eventual decline in the nineteenth century after puritanical sentiments became common amongst the populace. There was a strong demand for erotology in the pre-modern world, and the erotologists' sex manuals responded to that demand in a systematic way. Unfortunately not much is known about the Islamic contribution to the study of sexuality, where very little of the Muslim erotological literature has survived today.

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[1] Paradise refers to *al-jannah* (The Garden).

[2] Ar-Rūm 30: 21

[3] Sexual love is defined as a deep feeling of sexual desire and attraction. The term may also refer to sexual activities (often including sexual intercourse) between two people.

[4] Muslim, *Kitāb az-zakāh* – the Book of Zakat, 1006

[5] At-Tirmidhī, 1162

Considering Islam's rich legacy in the field of erotology, there is a lack of contemporary books on this important discipline.[7] Thus, after much deliberation, I took it upon myself to compose this concise account entitled, *A Taste of Honey: Sexuality and Erotology in Islam*.[8] This book is a study of the art of lovemaking and sexual love from a religious perspective. Drawing upon the Qur'ān,[9] *ḥadīth* literature and classic erotology treatises, *A Taste of Honey* provides a scholarly exposition of the prominent place that sexuality and erotology enjoyed in traditional Islam.[10] The central aim of this book is to argue that Islam is a sexually enlightened religion which teaches that sensuality should not be devoid of spirituality. The book also argues that the loss of sacred sensuality afflicting modern society can be reclaimed by a revival of the classic erotological tradition. Indeed partaking in the pleasures of the flesh can elevate the soul. A tender kiss, loving embrace or a thrust of penetration can all be a means to earn Divine rewards thus increasing the soul's rank in the next world and enabling one to draw closer to Allah, the Exalted! The early Muslims understood this and spent a considerable amount of time exploring the mysteries of sexual love and the science of coition which will be presented later.

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[6] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153, al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 92 Recorded by Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī in his *Musnad*, 4201, and *al-Mugnī* by Ibn Qudāmah

[7] Professor Daniel L. Newman points out; "In spite of the recently increased attention attracted by gender and sexuality in modern Islamic societies, the history of the discourse of sexuality and eroticism in the Arab-Muslim tradition remains to be written. This is all the more surprising in view of the unparalleled richness of erotological and erotic literature." Newman, 2014, p.15

[8] The title is a double entendre; whereby honey euphemistically refers to sexual intercourse or knowledge. In classical Arabic, honey is used to describe something, like sex, that is delicious and pleasurable. It can also be used to refer to knowledge, since acquiring knowledge is among life's great pleasures.

[9] The Qur'ān, the final scripture revealed by Allah to mankind, is the supreme authority in Islam. This supreme status stems from the belief that the Qur'ān is the word of Allah, revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad via the archangel Gabriel.

[10] In Arabic, the word Islam means submission. In the religious context Islam means submission to the One God (Allah). By 'traditional Islam' I am referring to the two definitions of this concept; orthodox Sunni Islam and Islamic history prior to modernity in the nineteenth century. The former is a contemporary reality, and the latter is historical.

My intentions in the composition of this book are manifold. Firstly, as an act of appreciation to Allah for the blessings of women and intimacy, as al-Jāḥiẓ, the great Afro-Arab prose writer said,

> *The man who does not appreciate the measure of his blessing cannot be grateful for it and if he cannot be grateful, he shall not enjoy increase!*[11]

Secondly, I wanted to address some misconceptions regarding sexuality and spirituality in religion as well as to raise awareness of the significant contributions that Muslim erotologists made towards the science of coition.[12] Thirdly, I wanted to share this beneficial knowledge with those who desire it, whatever their faith commitment. As a committed Muslim, I believe that it is my duty to reach out with good will and service not only to those who share my faith but to all humanity, so that people may witness the beauty of living faith in action.[13] In his excellent study *La Sexualité en Islam* (Sexuality in Islam), Tunisian sociologist Abdelwahab Bouhdiba advises that:

> It is a pious duty for a good Muslim to help all other members of the *ummah* (Muslim community) to become aware of the art of pleasure, to use it consciously, to benefit from it, in a word, to assume their bodies. The techniques of sexual pleasure must be widely spread among the faithful so that the community of Allah does not suffer depression or sorrow. Being a Muslim means knowing how to be happy and cheerful and to know that Allah's purpose

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[11] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p. 181

[12] This book will not be an in-depth study of the sexual conduct and attitudes of Muslims, as the practices of Muslims are not always in conformity with the religion of Islam. Committed Muslims aspire to incorporate the teachings of Islam in their lives. Thus I felt it is more important to explore the traditional Islamic worldview of sexuality as opposed to Muslim attitudes and sexual practices.

[13] Yusuf, 2007, p. 7

> is achieved through the beautiful, not through the ugly, through pleasure, not through contrition.[14]

This book aims to be a thought-provoking work on a highly sensitive yet extremely important subject.

What is the position of Sexuality and the Sacred Law (*Sharī'ah*)?

Sexuality refers to the human capacity for sexual feelings. It may also refer to an individual's sexual preference.[15] For Muslims, sexuality, like all aspects of human life, is a religious matter that is regulated by the Sacred Law (*Sharī'ah*). Legislated by Allah, the Sacred Law is a legal and ethical framework governing creed, behaviour and etiquette. The Sacred Law does not merely separate actions into categories of *wājib* (compulsory) and *ḥarām* (forbidden), but also includes categories of *mandūb* (recommended), *makrūh* (reprehensible), and *ḥalāl* (permissible).[16] The believer's primary allegiance should not be to any secular power, be it the state or its legislators, nor to a culture or an ethnic affiliation, but to the Sacred Law of Allah, which transcends both humanity and temporality. Thus any effort to understand what is moral and immoral from an Islamic perspective must engage with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, the two main sources of the Sacred Law of Islam.[17] In saying this, it should go without saying that Muslim attitudes and behaviour have not always conformed to Islamic teachings. I will now briefly look at changing Muslim attitudes towards sexuality through the eras of the Islamic caliphate.

PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

In the pre-Islamic period known as the era of Ignorance (*Jāḥiliyyah*) sexual consumerism ruled in the Arabian Peninsula. There were various forms of marriage and sexual relationships in the highly promiscuous Arab society.[18] Men practised unrestricted polygyny, prostitution was prevalent and women were treated like cattle. A man would also inherit his father's widow without her consent. Women had minimal rights over their husbands and many female slaves were coerced into prostitution by their owners. Female subordination was praised in the deeply patriarchal society, where male sexual pleasure was considered more important than female sexual pleasure. The advent of Islam in the seventh century radically transformed not only the Arabs but half of the known world's attitudes towards women and sexuality. The second caliph of Islam ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ said,

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[14] Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 140 *ummah* was spelt Umma in original text

[15] Oxford dictionary

[16] Brockopp, 2003. p.10

[17] Mernissi, 2011, p. 29

[18] 'Ā'ishah narrated, "There were four types of marriage during the Pre-Islamic period of ignorance. One type was similar to that of the present day, i.e. a man used to ask somebody else for the hand of a girl under his guardianship or for his daughter's hand, and give her a dowry and then marry her. The second type was that a man would say to his wife, after she had become clean from her period, 'go to so-and-so and have sexual relation with him.' Her husband would then keep away from her and would not sleep with her till she became pregnant from the other man with whom she was sleeping. When her pregnancy became evident, her husband would sleep with her if he wished.

> "By Allah we had not paid attention to women in *Jāhiliyyah* until Allah revealed what He revealed concerning them and assigned to them what He assigned to them [in terms of their God-given rights]."[19]

ERA OF THE PROPHET ﷺ AND THE RIGHTLY-GUIDED CALIPHS ؓ

After the Arabs accepted Islam, the Prophet ﷺ instilled Islamic values into the hearts of the believers as well as detailing each person's God-given rights and responsibilities. The Prophet ﷺ outlined not only the laws but the ethical principles that should govern sexual behaviour and relationships between men and women.[20] Lawful sex was held in high

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People did that so they might have a child of noble lineage. Such a marriage was called *al-Istibda'*. Another type of marriage was that a group of less than ten men would assemble and enter upon a woman, and all of them would have sexual relation with her. If she became pregnant and delivered a child and some days had passed after her delivery, she would send for all of them and none of them would refuse to come, and when they all gathered before her, she would say to them, 'You all know what you have done, and now I have given birth to a child. So, it is your child, O so-and-so!' naming whoever she liked, and her child would be attributed to him and he could not refuse to take him. The fourth type of marriage was that many people would visit a woman and she would not refuse anyone who came to her. Those were prostitutes, who used to fix red flags at their doors as signs, and whoever wished could have sexual intercourse with them. If any of them became pregnant and delivered a child, then all those men would be gathered around her and they would call the *qayfs* (people who are skilled in recognising the resemblance of a child to his father. See: Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī: *Fatḥ al-Bārī*) to them. The *qayfs* would attribute the child to the man whom they recognised as his father and she would let him be attributed to him and be called his son. The man could not refuse. But when Muḥammad a was sent with the Truth, he abolished all the types of marriages observed in the Pre-Islamic period of ignorance except the type of marriage the people recognise today." Al-Bukhārī 4834,, Abū Dāwūd 2272.

[19] Al-Bukhārī 4629, Muslim 1429

[20] Ethics does not have a precise equivalent in Arabic; *akhlāq*, the usual term used, is

esteem and regarded as an act of religious devotion for which Divine rewards in the Hereafter are promised.[21] Pre-marital and extra-marital intercourse (*zinā*) was strongly prohibited and acts or events which could lead to sexual indiscretions were discouraged. Ā'ishah, the beloved wife of the Prophet ﷺ, said,

> "The first revelations [of the Qur'ān] only mentioned the Garden and the Fire. Eventually, when the people were firm in their conviction of Islam, Allah revealed the lawful and forbidden. If the first *āyat* revealed had been, "Do not drink wine," the people would have responded, "We will never give up wine!" And if the first *āyat* revealed had been, "Do not fornicate," the people would have responded, "We will never give up fornication!"'[22]

Whilst the Sacred Law permitted men to having multiple sexual partners by way of polygyny and concubinage, women were not afforded the same sexual prerogatives since *"the male is not like the female"*[23] as the Qur'ān explains. Nevertheless, Islam granted women their rightful place in society, raising their status above being considered as chattel as well as acknowledging them to possess inalienable dignity and moral agency in their own right. Women were given the right to education, to hold property, inheritance and the right to sexual satisfaction. "Your wife has a right over you"[24] the Prophet ﷺ told one of his ascetic Companions who abstained from sexual relations. On another occasion, the Prophet ﷺ permitted a woman to obtain a divorce because she was sexually dissatisfied with her impotent husband.[25] The Sacred Law enshrined not only the female right to sexual enjoyment but also stressed the importance of her consent, with the Prophet ﷺ imploring men to "treat women well!"[26] In *ḥadīth* literature there are numerous examples of the Prophet ﷺ encouraging his Companions to venerate the flesh, attend to

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better rendered as morals or character, and *adab*, a less frequently used alternative, is more appropriately translated as comportment. Most of what falls under the rubric of ethics as understood in the modern West was the purview of the Muslim jurists, who addressed issues well beyond the scope of what is usually understood by the Sacred Law. ʿ

[21] Jawad, 1998, p. 9

[22] Al-Bukhārī

[23] Āl ʿImrān 3: 36

[24] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5199

[25] Jawad, 1998, p. 10

[26] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyā'*, 3331 and Muslim, *Kitāb ar-riḍāʿ*, 1468

the preliminaries of lovemaking and enjoy the pleasures of sexual foreplay. However despite their strong commitment towards the new faith, there were still instances of sexual immorality in the first community of believers. They were, after all, human beings but their firm faith and unparalleled good deeds ensured they were the greatest generation in human history as attested to by the Prophet ﷺ himself, "The best of people are my generation and then those who follow them and then those who follow them."[27]

Although the Prophet ﷺ instructed his followers to adhere to his Sunnah (normative practice) and the Sunnah of his Rightly Guided Caliphs, later generations of Muslims, as he prophesised, would deviate from his guidance and there would be a prevalence of adultery, same-sex relations and open debauchery in Muslim communities as non-Islamic concepts and traditions influenced Muslim attitudes towards sexuality.[28]

UMAYYAD CALIPHATE

The Umayyad Caliphate was the second of the four major Islamic caliphates. Under the Umayyads, Islam spread quickly into new lands but faced internal problems. Successful military conquests brought a large influx of prisoners of war into Muslim lands. Many of the captured women were enslaved and as concubines, were permitted to act for the sexual pleasure of their masters. Male slaves, particularly black African slaves, were sometimes castrated due to the fear of their perceived sexual unbridledness. Professional singing slave girls (*qiyān*) became popular amongst the rulers as courtesans and many eventually became concubines of the ruling elite.[29] The custodians of the Sacred Law, the jurists (*fuqahā'*) responded to the epoch's laxity by producing legal treatises detailing the Sacred Law's rulings concerning various sexual matters. Legal treatises, such as *al-Muwaṭṭā'* by acclaimed jurist Mālik ibn Anas, became the standard for Muslims in systematically shaping Islamic sexual ethics. Similarly, an emerging movement called Sufism (*tasawwuf*) sought to combat the hedonistic and decadent lifestyle afflicting Muslim society. Sometimes ignoring 'worldly' pursuits like marriage, some of the Sufis emphasised 'spirituality' and love of Allah. They continued to grow and gain a large following as Islam spread across half of the known world.

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[27] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb faḍāil al-ṣaḥābah*, 3451

[28] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "I enjoin upon you the fear of Allah, and to hear and obey even if it be an Abyssinian slave, for those of you who live after me will see much disagreement. You must then follow my Sunnah and that of the rightly-guided caliphs. Hold to it and stick fast to it. Avoid novelties, for every novelty is an innovation, and every innovation is an error." Abū Dāwūd

It is reported by Anas that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Among the signs of the Hour are the following: knowledge will decrease and ignorance will prevail; fornication and the drinking of wine will become common; the number of men will decrease and the number of women will increase, until one man will look after fifty women." Al-Bukhārī
It is reported by Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet ﷺ said, "By Him Who sent me with the Truth, this earth will not pass away until people are afflicted with landslides, pelted with stones, and transformed into animals." People asked, "When will that be, Messenger of Allah?" He said, "When you see women riding in saddles, singers are common, bearing false witness becomes widespread, and men lie with men and women with women". Related by Ibn Kathīr.

Unfortunately, the rights Allah granted women during the time of the Prophet ﷺ did not necessarily last for long. Not long after his passing and the transformation of the early Muslim community into an empire, in some lands at various times women's rights steadily began to undergo erosion. Slowly but surely some of the God-given rights granted them and enjoyed during the time of the Prophet ﷺ were taken away. They were discouraged from participating in public affairs; prevented from visiting the mosques; denied any opportunity to express their views; barred from developing their intellectual abilities; restricted in their movements and confined within the four walls of their home.[30] Naturally, this pessimistic picture did not pertain everywhere in the lands of Islam throughout the long history of the Muslims. Many civilisations in different epochs saw wonderfully egalitarian societies in which women were honoured greatly. But certainly during some periods and in some cultures, oppressive anti-female attitudes prevailed.

ABBASID CALIPHATE

The overthrowing of the Umayyads by the Abbasid caliphs in seven hundred and fifty of the Christian Era and the transfer of the capital from Syria to Iraq began a new epoch in Islamic history. In place of the tribal aristocracy of Arab conquerors, a new cosmopolitan ruling élite of officials and landowners came to control the entire Muslim empire with the exception of the Iberian Peninsula (*Andalus*), which remained under Umayyad control.[31] During the Abbasid era, the Muslim world became the intellectual centre for science, philosophy and medicine as the Abbasids in Baghdad and the Umayyads in Spain championed the cause of knowledge. The House of Wisdom in Baghdad was established, where both Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals sought to gather and translate the works of ancient Graeco-Roman, Persian and Indian philosophers into Arabic. Like many other Islamic sciences, the Muslim erotological tradition developed during this period. It will be looked at in more detail later.

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[29] Meri, 2006, vol. 1, p. 866

[30] Jawad, 1998, p. 14

[31] Lewis, 2004, p. 253. Love poetry flourished in *al-Andalus* amongst the Moors in medieval Europe. The term 'Moors' was used in a broader sense to refer to the Muslim inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, especially those of Berber (Amazigh) and Arab descent. It has also been said that the terms 'Moors' and 'Moorish' refer to the dark-skinned peoples of African descent who ruled in medieval Europe.

Despite the encouragement of intellectual pursuits in what is often described as the 'Golden Age of Islam', lewdness and debauchery proliferated in the Abbasid era. The literature of the time is replete with casual and sometimes sympathetic references to adulterous and same-sex love affairs between adult males and young boys. Such was the prevalence of pederasty in medieval Abbasid society, Islamic jurisprudential texts were brimful of edicts (*fatwās*) advising men not to look at beardless youths (*amrād*) for fear of sexual temptation (*fitnah*).[32] The sexual oppression of women was also a re-occurring theme, and women's public roles became even more restricted. Fabricated traditions attributed to the Prophet ﷺ demonising women exacerbated the problem, which contributed somewhat to the obsession of some male Muslim writers and jurists to restrict female sexuality. Depicting women as sexual predators causing uncontrollable temptation (*fitnah*), a plethora of jurisprudential works incorporated ideals of cloistering females, disregarding female sexuality as a blessing from Allah.[33]

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[32] See Khaled El-Rouayheb's discussion of the development of the term in See Tariq Rahman's *Prudery in South Asian Muslim Literature: The British Legacy* for example of 'boy-love' literature in South Asian Muslim literature. Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 174

[33] Divorced women were also stigmatised and found it difficult to remarry as al-Jāḥiẓ explains, "No stigma used to attach to a woman who had had a number of husbands and who, as long as she remained desirable to men, continued to remarry until she died. Nowadays, however, the clerics disapprove and some even claim to find this disgusting. If she has been married once, they grant a free woman the right to one more husband but consider it shameful for any man to become engaged to her thereafter; and they treat her as dishonoured. Yet they themselves take as mistresses slaves who have passed through countless masters. How can they sanction it with slaves but not where free women are concerned? How can they be so possessive of free women but not of the slaves who are the mothers of their children and the mistresses of sultans? Do you not agree that jealousy becomes absurd when it goes beyond the limits set by Allah himself?" Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p. 190

OTTOMAN CALIPHATE

Islamic jurisprudence, which flourished spectacularly between the ninth and twelve centuries, started to stagnate as many jurists were caught up in intellectualisation and also imitative following (*taqlīd*) of the independent jurists (*mujtaḥid*). After pressure from secular Western countries, slavery was gradually abolished in the Muslim world – although this was by no means completed even comparatively recently – which consequently brought an end to the institution of concubinage. Although same-sex relationships appear to have been tolerated in the Ottoman Middle East, sodomy (*liwāṭ*), in conformity with the prohibition of the Sacred Law, was still regarded by the Muslim populace as a form of sexual deviance. Repression of sexuality and a sometimes extreme gender apartheid seem to have contributed towards some men turning their attention to adolescent boys for the fulfilment of their sexual desires. Male prostitution and same-sex relations increased within Middle Eastern and North African society in particular to such an extent that erotologists debated amongst themselves as to whether men receive greater sexual pleasure from women or adolescent boys.[34] Fourteen century scholar Ibn Kathīr spoke about the spread of homosexuality amongst rulers, jurists, judges and others in his famed book on Islamic history, 'The Beginning and The End' (*al-Bidāyah wa an-nihāyah*).

THE MODERN ERA

Many commentators have said that prudery, which has become a common feature amongst many of today's Muslims, was caused by the Victorian concept of morality brought by the British colonisers to the Muslim world. Algerian sexologist and author of *Le Kama-Sutra Arabe: Deux mille ans de littérature érotique en Orient* (The Arab Kama Sutra: Two thousand years of erotic literature in the East) Malik Chebel commented,

> "In the last two centuries, we have lost our way. We no longer know how to speak of our sensual enjoyment, our pleasures, our utopias, or our liberties. This is the result of the trauma of our collective defeats – the rout in Granada (1492), subjugation to the Ottomans, colonization, and botched decolonization. We are in an unfortunate phase of sexual regression, of outright prudishness. This has reached the point where the very fact of speaking of a man's or woman's nudity seems like an outrage. Sexuality is not something impure or dirty."[35]

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[34] Ibn Falīta, 1977, pp. 109-113 and pp. 131-134, Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, pp. 20-23

[35] See MEMRI's 'Islam and Sex'

Emirati marriage counsellor and author of *Top Secret: Sexual Guidance for Married Couples,* Wedad Lootah is amongst a growing body of female Muslim writers calling for a return to the sacred tradition to resolve the sexuality crisis afflicting much of the Muslim world. Despite receiving some criticism, Lootah's book was approved by the Mufti of Dubai and was well received by many Arab Muslims. Lootah cites the ignorance of female sexual pleasure and sexual practices that are frowned on between marital couples as reasons why she decided to write her book. According to Lootah, many Muslim men in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries engage in anal intercourse with other men due to strict gender segregation and the inability to marry at a young age:

> "Many men who had anal sex with men before marriage want the same thing with their wives, because they don't know anything else. This is one reason we need sex education in our schools."[36]

Many psychologists argue that the male attraction to young boys in Muslim countries like Pakistan stems from the rigid segregation of the sexes where women are rarely seen in society and are seen as the inferior gender. Despite the fact that same-sex relations are strictly forbidden and abhorred in Islam, the sexual exploitation of young males continues in many Muslim countries. The topic is often denied by conservative Muslims for whom sexual matters are taboo and considered shameful. Pakistani professor Tariq Rahman argues in his study of South Asian Muslim literature that it was only after the invasion of the British that South Asian Muslim reformers began to regard eroticism as shameful and 'unIslamic.'[37] Professor Abdur Rahman I. Doi also attributed the change in West African Muslims' attitudes towards sex and marriage to Christian imperialism. Prior to colonisation, many African cultures were polygynous. It was not until European Christian missionaries introduced the concept of 'one-man, one-woman' monogamy that calls for the abolition of polygyny began to surface amongst Muslims.[38]

In response to the crisis of sexuality within Muslim communities, there has been an upsurge of Muslims writers and academics attempting to revive sexuality within a God-conscious framework. In Morocco, feminist writer and sociologist Fatema Mernissi gained notoriety for her books on female sexuality; *Beyond the Veil: Male-female Dynamics in a Muslim Society* and *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation*

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[36] See Robert Worth 'Better sex - with help from the Qur'an'

[37] See Tariq Rahman's *Prudery in South Asian Muslim Literature: The British Legacy*

[38] Doi, 1997, pp. 149-154

of Women's Rights in Islam. Drawing from the works of traditional Muslim scholars such as al-Ghazālī, and in light of the repression of female sexuality in North African culture Mernissi called upon Muslim women to reawaken it. The publicity generated by Mernissi's books reignited interest in the issue of female sexuality in Muslim society and prompted female writers to address it in various parts of the Muslim world. Egyptian feminist Mona Eltahawy argued that Arab culture is deeply misogynistic and oppresses female sexuality in her provocative book, *Headscarves and Hymens: Why the Middle East Needs a Sexual Revolution*. Eltahawy called for a sexual revolution in the Middle East and North Africa to awaken women's right to their sexuality. Shereen El Feki's award-winning book, *Sex and the Citadel: Intimate Life in a Changing Arab World*, provides an insightful exploration of the sexual history of the Arab world and the emergence of Arab female academics and novelists tackling female sexuality. Erotic novels, such as *The Almond: The Sexual Awakening of a Muslim Woman* and *The Proof of Honey*, quickly became bestsellers throughout the Arab world after their release in 2006 and 2009 respectively. The two books' celebration of a Berber and Arab woman's discovery of their sensuality challenged North African and Arab sensibilities regarding female pleasure and eroticism. Author of *The Proof of Honey*, Salma an-Neimi, said at the end of her book:

> "Sex is not the scandal, the secret is the scandal."

Dubbed 'Egypt's Dr. Ruth,'[39] Egyptian sexologist Dr. Heba Kotb has become increasingly popular in the Middle East for her television programme, *Kalām Kabīr* (The Big Talk), tackling the sex taboo of the Arab world. Kotb has been instrumental in educating Arabic speaking Muslims about the importance of sexual enjoyment for married couples from a religious and medical perspective. Kotb said:

> "I wanted to be the first sexologist in the Arab World not because of the challenge of being first. That didn't cross my mind. I did it because I was interested in the subject and I wanted to help people."[40]

In addition to her television programme, Kotb, provides sexual therapy to men and women at her clinic. Kotb advises her clients about the importance of communicating about what they want sexually from their partner as well as informing her clients about lovemaking techniques to enhance their sexual lives. Couples are advised to explore their bodies, understand anatomy and physiology, as well as the psychology of sex - getting men to understand the fine art of wooing their wives in and out of bed. Studies have found that vaginismus[41] and female sexual dysfunction is a common condition in Egypt where Kotb resides. Kotb's work has inspired many other Muslim women and organisations throughout the Muslim world to speak about the issue of female sexuality.[42]

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[39] Ruth Westheimer is a renowned German sex therapist and author commonly known as 'Dr. Ruth'

[40] Raman, *'Egypt's Dr. Ruth': Let's talk sex in the Arab world*, 2007

In Malaysia, a Muslim women's organisation called The Obedient Wives Club (OWC), caused controversy with the publication of its book, *Islamic Sex*. The OWC advised wives to be a "good whore to your husband" and serving him "better than a first-class prostitute," because that could help curb social ills such as prostitution, domestic violence and abandoned children, all of which they attributed to husbands' unfulfilled sexual needs. The vice president of the organisation, Dr Rohaya Mohammad, said:

> "A man married to a woman who is as good or better than a prostitute in bed has no reason to stray. Rather than allowing him to sin, a woman must do all she can to ensure his desires are met."[43]

Since prostitutes are regarded to be sexually adventurous, the intended meaning of the analogy is to inform women that they should not be afraid to venture sexually with their husbands. Although the comment has drawn a great deal of criticism from men and women alike, it was not meant to be offensive or degrading to women Dr Mohammad claimed.

The OWC also advised men of the importance of showing love and affection towards their wives by following the example of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.[44] Despite its growing popularity and the fact that much of what OWC said was derived from the teachings of traditional Islamic texts, the organisation was strongly criticised by some Muslims and feminist groups for its "sexist and nonsensical teachings."[45]

We feel the above demonstrates clearly that there is a need for Muslims to honestly address the taboo topic of sex, particularly within Muslim communities where sexual matters are not spoken about frankly.

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[41] When a woman has vaginismus, her vagina's muscles squeeze or spasm when the penis enters her. It can be midly uncomfortable, or painful.

[42] El Feki, 2010, *Sex and the Citadel*, pp. 49-52

[43] See Catrin Nye's 'Obedient Wives' Club faces cticism in UK'

[44] See Kate Hodal's 'Outrage as Obedient Wives Club spreads across south-east Asia'

[45] See Catrin Nye's 'Obedient Wives' Club faces cticism in UK'

We have clear precedent for that since a number of the early Muslims discussed the issue of sexuality within the *ilm al-bāh* erotological tradition.

What is Erotology and the Art of Coition (*ʿilm al-bāh*)?

Erotology is defined as the study of sexual love and lovemaking.[46] Etymologically, it is derived from the Greek word 'eros,' meaning passionate love, and the suffix 'ology' meaning a 'subject of study' or 'a branch of knowledge.' The study of sex and sexuality can be traced back to ancient Greece from the works of Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle. Arguably the most prominent work in antiquity on the subject of *eros* is Plato's *Symposium,* which is a discussion among the students of Socrates on the nature of eros. Indian philosopher Mallinaga Vatsyayana's third century erotic manual, the *Kama Sutra,* is generally considered the standard book on erotology. Vatsyayana is compiler as much as author, drawing sources from the vast body of Hindu erotology. Indeed the *Kama Sutra* is a religious treatise from a Hindu perspective written to advise people about the ethics and art of sexual love. Greek philosophers Galen and Soranus further advanced and systematised ancient sexual knowledge, which later motivated Arabic speaking Muslim and Christian writers to write extensively about the art of coition and the spiritual joys of physical ecstasy. The influence of Greek philosophy on the development of *ʿilm al-bāh* is evident in erotologists' numerous references to Greek physicians and philosophers in their treatises.[47] Arab-Muslim erotologists not only assimilated ancient Greek theories in their works, but they expanded and developed them.[48] Where they excelled was in their use of language in their description of the art of lovemaking. Classical Arabic is rich in its use of rhetoric and sexual euphemisms which the Arabic speaking erotologists made frequent use of in vividly describing the joys of sexual pleasure.

Developed in ninth century Arabia, the erotological discipline of the art of coition (*ʿilm al-bāh*) is a precursor to the modern western sexual science of sexology. *ʿIlm al-bāh* is a multidisciplinary literary genre dedicated to the study and description of sexual love, intermingling various religious, philosophical and medical concepts. The technical definition of *ʿilm al-bāh,* as defined by Ṭāsh Kubrī and Ḥājī Khalīfah, is:

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[46] Merriam Webster dictionary

[47] Newman, 2014, p. 28

[48] Newman, 2014, p. 32

> ʿ*Ilm al-bāh* is the scientific study of treatments related to sexual potency from food aphrodisiacs, medical stimulants and stimulants to enhance sexual potency and pleasure. The science also includes the study of penis enlargements, and vaginal rejuvenation, the two important organs for sexual pleasure, as well as other actions related to it.
>
> From amongst these actions are; descriptions of sex positions and its etiquettes, which are the pathway to attaining sexual pleasure and pregnancy. Some of the erotologists related many difficult sex positions which are practically impossible to perform. Erotologists also furnished their treatises with anecdotes to arouse the sexual desire for people who have weak sexual desire or those who are impotent in order that people would not despair [from a lack of sexual performance]."[49]

Ibn Nadim's bio-bibliographical encyclopaedia of the late tenth century, the *Fihrist*, cites about a hundred ʿ*ilm al-bāh* treatises, most of which are lost. In the sixteenth century, Ottoman scholar Aḥmad Muṣṭafā, commonly known as Ṭāsh Kubrī (d. 1560), listed ʿ*ilm al-bāh* in his bibliographical encyclopaedia *Miftaḥ as-sa'ādah* as one of a hundred and fifty respected sciences in the cosmos of Islamic civilisation.[50] In the seventeenth century Muṣṭafā ibn ʿAbdullāh known as Ḥājī Khalīfah (d. 1656) listed over a dozen Arabic, Persian and Turkish books belonging to the Arab-Muslim erotological tradition in his encyclopaedia *Kashf aẓ-ẓanūn*. British professor Daniel Newman enumerated one hundred and twenty-five erotological treatises from the Arab-Muslim tradition in the appendix to his study of Arab aphrodisiacs in the Middle Ages.[51]

EROTOLOGY SUB-GENRES

Patrick Franke explores the evolution of the Arab-Muslim erotology tradition in his essay, 'Before Scientia Sexualis in Islamic Culture'. Franke argues that the ʿ*ilm al-bāh* literary genre is made up of two distinct sub-genres: works with medical themes and those whose themes are sexually arousing.[52] The main difference between these two forms is that the medical works placed greater emphasis on preparing the body physically for intercourse, whilst the sexually arousing works focused on psychological ways to arouse sexual desire.[53] Arguably there are two other sub-genres within the art of coition tradition that differed from the two sub-genres Franke identified: works with a philosophical theme and those from a traditionalist perspective. The former are largely derived from the theories of Graeco-Roman and Indian philosophers. In contrast, the latter are largely based upon Islamic sources: the Qur'ān, Prophetic traditions and reports (*akhbār*) of the early Muslims.[54] We will look at some of the major erotology works from the four sub-genres of the art of coition (*ilm al-bāh*) tradition.

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[49] Al-Ḥasanī,, 2011, p. 8

[50] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, p.8

[51] Newman, 2014, pp. 163-174

[52] Franke referred to the 'sexually arousing themed' sub-genre as 'pornographic themed.' See Patrick Franke. *Before scientia sexualis in Islamic cultures between erotology, medicine and pornography*, 2012, pp. 161-173

PHILOSOPHY-THEMED EROTOLOGY

The oldest philosophically-themed erotology works appear to be al-Jāḥiẓ's (d. 869) ninth century treatises: *Mufākharat al-jawārī wa al-ghilmān* (Concubines and Youths in Competition), *an-Nisā'* (Women) and *Kitāb al-ʿurs wa al-ʿarā'is* (Book of Marriage and Newly-weds).[55] Al-Jāḥiz follows the methodology of the scholars of *ʿaqīdah* (*mutakallimūn*) in its composition in which more emphasis is placed on logic and rationality than on the sacred texts in discussing matters like love, desire and the nature of the soul. Another of the early philosophical erotological writers was al-Kindī (d. 870), a central figure in the translation movement of ninth-century Baghdad, which rendered much of Greek philosophy, science and medicine into Arabic. Al-Kindī's treatise, *Kitāb al-bāh* (Book on Coition), is a concise philosophical treatment of the secrets of sexual intercourse.[56] Beside al-Kindī, there were two other protagonists of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement of the early Abbasid period in Baghdad who contributed to the philosophical development of the art of coition with their own works: Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (d. 877) and Qusṭā ibn Lūqā (d. 912). The Christian scholar Qusṭā ibn Lūqā composed two separate works on the subject, *Kitāb al-bāh* and *Kitāb al-bāh wa-mā yuḥtāju ilay-hi min tadbīr al-badan fi-stiʿmāli-hī* (Book of Coition and the Bodily Control Necessary for its Application), directed to the secretary of the Armenian chief-patriarch, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, and a third book entitled *Kitāb fī al-bāh* (Book on Coition) consisting of twenty-two questions and answers relating to the subject. Another noteworthy philosophically-themed erotological book is *Kitāb al-bāh wa manāfi'i-hī wa-madārri-hī wa-mudāwāti-hī* (Book of Coition, its Beneficial and Detrimental Effects and its Medications) written by Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā' ar-Rāzī (d. 925), a Persian polymath, who, under the name of Rhazes, later became one of the most important authorities for Latin scholasticism. Famed Persian philosopher and physician, Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), better known in the West by the name Avicenna, penned some interesting philosophically-themed erotological treatises such as *Risālah fī al-ʿishq* (Treatise on Infatuation) and *Bāḥ* (Coition).[57]

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[53] See Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *Islam and Sexuality*, 2012, pp. 155-159

[54] According to Professor Daniel Newman, one end of the spectrum of Arabic erotological treatises are belles-lettres (*adab*) works in which the erotic fictional component predominates, as in the works of al-Jāḥiẓ and as-Suyūṭī. On the other end are treatises which deal with erotology from a scientific (medical) perspective, such as those by Ibn Sīnā, al-Jazzār, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā and aṭ-Ṭūsī. Newman, 2014, p. 38.

[55] Professor Daniel Newman said the oldest known work of erotology may have been written in the late eighth to early ninth century by Persian-born writer, Ibn Bukhtīshū'. See David Newman's *The Sultan's Sex Positions: Arab Aphrodisiacs in the Middle Ages*.

[56] Al-Mazīdī, p. 13

The last important treatise of this sub-genre is *Tawq al-ḥamāmah* (The Collar of the Dove), written by eleventh century Andalusian jurist Ibn Ḥazm. Borrowing heavily from Plato's *Phaedrus,* Ibn Ḥazm's treatise is a fascinating exposition of the philosophy and psychology of sexual love.[58] In response to some of his detractors, Ibn Ḥazm said: "I am aware that certain of my fanatical enemies will be shocked by my having composed a book of this kind. They will say, 'He has acted contrary to his professions, and deviated from his chosen path.' But I permit no man the privilege of ascribing to me motives, which were never mine."[59]

MEDICALLY-THEMED EROTOLOGY

Famed Moroccan physician and mathematician as-Samaw ʿal ibn Yaḥyā al-Maghribī compiled his medical-erotic manual *Nuzhat al-aṣḥāb fī mu ʿāsharah al-aḥbāb* (Conversation of Friends on Companionship with Beloved Ones) in the twelfth century.[60] Consisting of two volumes, the first volume is mainly theoretical and is devoted to various sexual subjects. The second volume is largely practical and is devoted to aphrodisiacs and to drugs for the medical treatment of genital organ diseases. Ibn Yaḥyā wanted to write a "practical, medical and literary book" for the layperson and intellectual on the ethics and art of sexual intercourse. Ibn Yaḥyā advises his predominately male readers to make use of physiognomy (*ʿilm al-firāsah*) to assess the spiritual and intellectual qualities of women. He also provides information about the various 'tricks' of concubine merchants (*nakhkhasūn*), who set up their stalls in fairs or street corners to deceive the purchasers of slave girls (*jāriyah*).[61]

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[57] Al-Mazīdī, pp. 132-162

[58] An-Nafzāwī (translated by Jim Colville), 1999, p. ix

[59] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, pp. 280-284

[60] The book was translated into English as '*A Jaunt in the Art of Coition,*' by Adnan Jarkas and S.A. Khawwam as part of the Arab erotic series

The Judaeo-Arabic physician Abū ʿImrān Mūsā al-Qurṭubī, also known as Moses Maimonides, was a leading figure in spreading the knowledge of ancient and medieval medicine in the Middle Ages. He authored a number of medical texts drawing upon ancient Greek and Islamic sources. His book *at-Tadbīr al-muʿīn ʿalā kathrat al-jimā ʿ* (The Management that Helps to Have a Great Deal of Sexual Intercourse) is an interesting treatise on the importance of aphrodisiacs in increasing sexual pleasure. The popularity of Moses Maimonides' and Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's works illustrates the contribution that Jewish and Christian scholars made to the development of the Arab-Muslim erotological tradition, in which scholars from the three Abrahamic faiths collaborated in their investigation of human sexuality.[62]

Rujū' ash-shaykh ilā ṣibāh fī al-awwah ʿalā al-bāh (Restoring an Old Man's Youthful Sexual Potency) is attributed to one of the leading Ottoman literati, Aḥmad ibn Sulaymān (d. 1573) commonly known as Ibn Kemal Pesha.[63] Written at the request of the Sultan Selim Khan, the book is an intelligent and exhaustive compilation, largely made up of borrowings from earlier works such as *Bāh* by an-Naḥli, *al-ʿUrs wa al-ʿarā'is* (The Wedding, the Bride and Groom) by al-Jāḥiẓ, *Qiyān* (Slave girls) by Ibn Ḥijāb an-Nuʿmān and *Jāmiʿ al-ladhdhah* (Encyclopedia of Pleasure) by Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib.[64] Mixing erotic stories with sexological commentary, the treatise consists of two parts: the first dealing with various elements that have an effect on coitus, homosexuality, procurement of female slaves, the sexual organs and aphrodisiacs. The second part comprises witty and titillating stories and anecdotes about perfumery, poetry, love techniques, sex positions, somnambulism and semi-conscious states. The author stresses the purity of his intentions in coming to the aid of the sexually handicapped, who are "incapable of realising their wishes in a lawful manner."[65]

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61 Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008. pp. 1-3, Bouhdiba, 2004, pp. 142-143

62 Glick, 2005, p. 322

63 Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 143 Daniel Newman states that the author of the treatise is Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf at-Tīfāshī. An Arabic edition of the book published in Baghdad in 2010 does not mention the author of the treatise.

64 At-Tīfāshī, pp. 18-19. The *Encyclopedia of Pleasure* has also been attribute to a scholar called Ibn as-Samsamānī

65 Bouhdiba, 2004,.pp. 143-144

Persian polymath Nasīr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī wrote *Kitāb al-albāb al-bāhiyya wa at-tarākīb as-sulṭāniyyah* (The Book of Choice Sexual Stimulants and the Sultan's Mixtures) in the thirteenth century. Aṭ-Ṭūsī was most influential in the fields of philosophy, theology, mathematics, geometry and astronomy. Sunni Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun considered the Shi'i aṭ-Ṭūsī to be one of the greatest Muslim scholars. The *Book of Choice Sexual Stimulants* was composed at the behest of the Sultan of Qāzān. The treatise was one of the most popular pharmacological erotology treatises of the premodern Muslim world. Devoted primarily to aphrodisiacs as well as sexual practices and positions, aṭ-Ṭūsī recommends his treatise as a self-study manual for those afflicted with various sexual ailments and diseases, especially impotence. In the fifteenth century it was rendered into Turkish, by order of the Ottoman Sultan Murād II. The *Book of Choice Sexual Stimulants* has since been translated into Persian, and more recently into English by British Professor Daniel Newman.[66] Explaining the reason for the composition of his book, aṭ-Ṭūsī said,

> We begin by explaining the motive behind the writing of this book, the discovery of scholars' secrets and revelation of their lubrications. The caliph of Qāzan had a beautiful son, whose body was struck by paralysis which incapacitated [the movement of] the lips. The caliph asked the shaykh of the world, the king of scholars of the age, the teacher of scholars of all time, the pillar of Islam and all Muslims, preceptor of kings and sultans, one who is full of blessings, Master Nāṣir ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī – may the Almighty have mercy upon him – to compile a book on medicine that is small in size but has many benefits that will be useful to Muslims. He acceded to the request and compiled the present book, in which he gathered the wisdom culled from the works of past scholars and compiled compendiums including that which is most useful and beneficial for the preservation of a healthy body, and the causes for the appearance of illnesses and their treatment. Anyone reading the treatise will no longer need a physician for medical treatment as it contains all the reader requires to treat ailments and diseases that are described in terms of tried and tested benefits and selected remedies.[67]

The last known pure medical art of coition treatise was *Nuzhat an-nufūs fī mā yuṣliḥ li'l-ʿarīs wa al-ʿarūs* (The Soul's Excursion regarding what

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[66] Newman, 2014, p. 63

[67] Aṭ-Ṭūsī, 2014, pp. 85-86

Benefits the Bride and Groom), written by Moroccan scholar ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Ḥasanī al-ʿAlawī (d. 1817). Little is known about al-Ḥasanī other than that he was a respected scholar of his time. The book is split into two parts, each of which comprises ten chapters. Part one is dedicated to the erotic secrets of men and part two is dedicated to the erotic secrets of women. In *The Soul's Excursion* al-Ḥasanī mentioned various alimentary aphrodisiacs and medical treatments to treat and enhance sexual pleasure. *The Soul's Excursion* is an expansion of another erotological work, *al-Īḍāḥ fī asrār an-nikāḥ* (Elucidation of the Secrets of Intercourse) written by Egyptian scholar ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn Naṣr ash-Shayzarī (d. 1193).

SEXUALLY AROUSING EROTOLOGY

In the *Fihrist,* Ibn an-Nadīm makes mention of a new genre of works belonging to the *ʿilm al-bāh* tradition in the new sexually arousing style (*ʿalā l-ṭarīq al-ḥadīth al-mushabbiq*). The erotic treatises were very explicit and indeed borderline pornographic. Ibn an-Nadīm lists a number of titles such as *Kitāb bahrāmdukht* (The Book on the Daughter of Bahrām), *Kitāb al-ḥurra wa al-ama* (The Book on the Freewoman and the Slave Girl) and *Kitāb al-jawārī al-ḥabā'ib* (The Book of Beloved Slave Girls). The most famous of these books was *Alfiyya wa-shalfiyya*, of which Ibn an-Nadīm mentions two recensions; a greater and a lesser one. The work consists of the memoirs of an Indian woman who, having married a thousand men and thus acquired an unrivalled sexual experience, wishes to share with the reader the lessons she has learnt. Moreover the book was illustrated, a rare thing for this period, with erotic nudes in various sex positions. In the first half of the twelfth century the Persian poet al-Ḥakīm al-Azraqī versified *Alfiyya wa-shalfiyya* for his patron Tughan Shah, the Seljuq prince of Nishapūr. Both the original work and Azraqī's verse rendering seem to be lost, but, as Hājji Khalīfa informs us, some stories taken from it have been preserved in a Turkish erotological treatise of the sixteenth century, *Dāfiʿ al-ghumūm wa rāfiʿ al-humūm* (The Repeller of Sorrows and Dispeller of Cares). The treatise, a compilation of various earlier works, was dedicated to Prince Qorqud, the son of the Ottoman Sultan Bāyezīt II. *The Repeller of Sorrows and Dispeller of Cares* is said to be one of the most playful and libertine *ʿilm al-bāh* treatises ever to have been written. In his analysis of the book, Franke said,

> Every point in connection with sexual pleasure, even masturbation, adultery and deviant sexualities, is discussed openly and in the fullest of detail, amusing anecdotes being scattered lavishly throughout.[68]

The Algerian poet and anthologist, Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf at-Tīfāshī (d. 1253) authored *Nuzhat al-albāb fī ma lā yūjadu fī kitāb* (The Hearts' Excursion regarding what is Not to be Found in any Book). *The Hearts' Excursion* is an explicit, sexually arousing treatise "devoted almost entirely to forbidden loves."[69] The author discusses: how to commit fornication without been seen, seducing veiled women, pederasty and its perceived advantages over making love to women, hermaphrodites, lesbianism and nymphomania. Despite discussing many sexual practices, which are considered abhorrent from the perspective of the Sacred Law, at-Tīfāshī asserts his noble intentions,

> In the writing of this book I did not aim to increase corruption, to encourage sin, or assist those seeking pleasure and sinfulness by trying to make lawful what Allah the Almighty has made unlawful; rather, my aim is to help those whose passion is reduced to achieve pleasure in a lawful context, which is the basis of civilised society and procreation.[70]

At-Tīfāshī also authored two other treatises on erotology: *Asbāb al-bāh* (The Causes of Coition) and *Mā yaḥtāj ilayh ar-rijāl wa an-nisā' fī al-bāh* (What Men and Women Need for Coition), which have both recently been published in Cairo, Egypt along with other erotic treatises in a book called *Asrār al-jimāᶜ ᶜind ar-rijāl wa an-nisā'* (Secrets of Sexual Intercourse for Men and Women).[71]

Ar-Rawḍ al-ᶜāṭir fī nuzhat al-khāṭir (The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delight), known in the west as the Arab *Kama Sutra*, represents the most popular prototype of Muslim erotic literature. The author, Tunisian Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī from the sixteenth century, was an obscure scholar and counsellor to the Sultan of Tunis ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Hafsī. An-Nafzāwī recollected in the introduction that after his previous erotology treatise *Tanwīr al-wiqāᶜ fī asrār al-jimāᶜ*(Illuminating the Performance regarding the Secrets of Sexual Intercourse) came to the attention of the Sultan;

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[68] Franke, 2012, p. 166

[69] Bouhdiba,2004, p. 143

[70] Newman, 2014, p. 43

[71] Al-Mazīdī, p. 13

> He sent for me and insisted that I come as quickly as I could. I was received most cordially at his residence. After three days of gracious hospitality, he granted me an audience, produced my book and inquired if I really was the author. "Do not be modest," he told me. "Everything you have written is true and no-one can take issue with it. You may not be the first to have dealt with this subject but Allah knows, it's one that needs to be more widely understood. Only an idiot or half-educated fool would laugh at this or shut his eyes to it."[72]

The Sultan then suggested to an-Nafzāwī that he should expand some chapters and incorporate additional ones. In particular, the Sultan suggested that an-Nafzāwī should elaborate on the various aphrodisiacs he had briefly dealt with in *Illuminating the Performance*. The Sultan also recommended that unabridged anecdotes of the stories which he related in his previous work should be better presented and that he should explain the various causes of sexual desire and abstinence.[73]

The Perfumed Garden was not well known outside its author's region until it was popularised in recent years, largely through a French translation made in Algiers in 1876. Richard Francis Burton translated the first English edition of the book but has been criticised for his expansion of the original text. Jim Colville's recent English translation is more concise and considered to be closer to the Arabic original. An-Nafzāwī directs his message to the needs and tastes of ordinary married men. An-Nafzāwī stresses the God-given nature of sexual pleasure, describing it as the most complete and intense kind of pleasure a human can experience and one vital to lasting marital concord. The book is concerned with integrity, whilst encouraging a sense of fun and lack of inhibition. After alternately describing what is praiseworthy and blameworthy in men and women, in masterly fashion an-Nafzāwī analyses various stages in the work of the flesh, accompanying his descriptions with spicy details, indecent stories and judicious advice. Like a fair number of works of this genre it contains descriptions of legally abominable sexual practices including sodomy, lesbianism and bestiality.[74]

TRADITIONALIST-THEMED EROTOLOGY

The traditionalists' erotology treatises that emerged in the ninth century were pietistic attempts by Muslim writers to educate, and at times entertain, their readers about the Divine blessing of sexuality. The Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* were the primary sources utilised by traditionalist erotologists, though they also utilised the traditions of the first three generations of Muslims known as the pious predecessors (*salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) in the compilation of their treatises. Examining normative Andalusian erotology texts, Manuela Marina cites *Kitāb adab an-nisā'* (Treatise on the Proper Behaviour of Women), by ʿAbd al-Mālik ibn Ḥabīb. The *Treatise on the Proper Behaviour of Women* is not an original work in the modern sense of the word, but a collection of materials gathered by Ibn Ḥabīb on the main subject of the book. The book is filled with passages from the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and short stories whose protagonists are the wives and Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, and other prominent Muslims from the early period. A significant part of the treatise is directly related to erotology, as is indicated by some of the book's chapter headings:

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[72] An-Nafzāwī (translated by Jim Colville), 1999, p. 4

[73] An-Nafzāwī (translated by Jim Colville), 1999, p. 4

[74] Bouhdiba, 2004, pp. 144-145

> On what a man has to do with his wife and a woman with her husband on the night of consummation;
> On what has to be done during sexual intercourse;
> On the reward earned through sexual intercourse and the recommendation to practise it frequently;
> On the heavy breathing, groaning, panting and frolicking allowed during intercourse;
> On condemning a man's speaking (in public) about his intimacy with his wife;
> On what a man should do when he is attracted by a woman;
> On the question of the permissibility of a man having sexual intercourse with his wife when she is kneeling and in other ways he may wish;
> On condemning sexual intercourse with a woman other than by the vulva;
> On *coitus interruptus*;
> On how frequently a woman needs to have intercourse;
> On condemning lesbianism[75]

Rushd al-labīb ilā muʿāsharah al-ḥabīb (An Intelligent Man's Guide to Dalliance with the Beloved) was written almost half a century after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad by the poet and statesman, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, better known as Ibn Falīta (d. 1331). Ibn Falīta wrote his sex guide with the express permission of the sultan of Yemen. The treatise deals with coital techniques without reference to prescriptions or aphrodisiacs. The purpose of the book, according to Ibn Falīta, was to focus on the pleasures of intercourse rather than deal with medical issues or provide remedies for problems in sexual performance.[76] Ibn Falīta lays stress on the physical and temperamental compatibility of man and wife, as well as highlighting matters of health and personal hygiene. He recognises the importance of sexual arousal through foreplay, both partners achieving sexual pleasure and the female orgasm. The book is divided into fourteen chapters:

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[75] Marin, 2002, pp. 3- 17

> ...which contain a variety of arts which ignorant people would accuse me (the author) of having practised and which intelligent people would be fair enough to believe that I could not have practised. In answer to such a groundless accusation I would say that wine, for instance, has so often been described by chaste people who have never drunk it and have never been condemned for drinking it but who could, with strong observation and clear mind, give surpassing descriptions of it. Of this particular point I would say:
>
> > Do not be disturbed by a frivolous man
> > Who is fond of using obscene words.
> > A man may seem fond of immorality but
> > Spiritually he may be as chaste as a hermit.[77]

The material of the treatise was drawn from Umayyad and Abbasid societies at the zenith of their prosperity. Like other erotologists of the traditionalist genre, Ibn Falīta relies upon the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*s in his exploration of human sexuality. In his study, he also makes use of the works of ancient Indian and Arab erotologists as well as verses of poetry and anecdotes. Sixteenth century, Ottoman scholar Tāsh Kubrī said that Ibn Falīta's book is one of the most comprehensive books on erotology.[78] The book was translated into English by Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Khawwam in 1975 as part of a series presenting classic Arab erotological treatises to English speaking Western readers.[79]

Tuḥfat al-ʿarūs wa rawḍat an-nufūs (The Bridegroom's Gift and the Souls' Meadow) by Muḥammad al-Maghribī at-Tījānī (d. 1543), begins with a very classical evocation of chastity in marriage. The author asserts that seeking sexual satisfaction is a laudable pursuit providing that it is exercised in a lawful manner. Then at-Tijānī provides detailed, picturesque and highly erotic descriptions of the female body.[80]

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[76] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 5

[77] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 5

[78] Al-Hasanii al-'Ulwii, 2011, p.8

[79] Translated into English as *An Intelligent Man's Guide to the Art of Coition* by ʿAdnan Jarkas and Ṣalāḥ Addin Khawwam

Jawāmiʿ al-ladhdha (Encyclopedia of Pleasure) is a compendium by the medieval Arab writer Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib (d. 1276). Written during Islam's flourishing intellectual period, *The Encyclopedia of Pleasure* is a highly sophisticated, moral and ethical guide to sex that combines the literary, philosophical and medical knowledge of the time. The treatise is truly breathtaking, consisting of forty-three chapters covering every conceivable sexual practice. Despite making use of the various knowledges of his time, from the ancient Greeks to Indian erotologists, Ibn Nāṣir ultimately based the ethical principles of sexual behaviour on the sacred sources. Ibn Nāṣir's message was clear: sex is a gift from God, and we are supposed to enjoy it. The author was also concerned with female pleasure, where he related the advice of female authorities on sexuality, and shows a fine appreciation of female physiology, giving detailed classifications of women's libidos and types of orgasms. The sexual insatiability of women was a well-established theme in many of the erotology treatises that preceded *Encyclopedia of Pleasure,* however, unlike many of its predecessors, Ibn Nāṣir did not try to curb the female sex drive. Rather, he goes to great length to advise his male readers on how to fulfil it. It should begin with unabashed romance - love letters "full of sweet words, nice poems," not to mention patience, kindness, and tact, as well as the occasional gift. As British-Egyptian writer Shereen El Feki comments, "The book shows considerable insight into female character, offering the following counsel to bewildered lovers:

> It should also be known that it is in a woman's nature to get angry with a man without any reason whatsoever. When she does, the man should put up with her because she will return to her normal condition of her accord. Moreover, a woman is of such a nature that she may be under the delusion that a man is guilty and so establishes his guilt without investigation. When the woman gets angry and treats the man unkindly as a result of her delusion, he should be wise enough to put up with her and not take her delusion seriously."[81]

Ibn Nāṣir's treatise was well received during his time and was regarded as one of the most comprehensive erotic treatises in Arabic. The manual was later suppressed by an increasingly conservative Muslim society because of its explicit material.[82]

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[80] Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 144

[81] El Feki, 2014, *Sex and the Citadel,* p. 54; Ibn Nasir al-Khatib, 1977, p. 245

Special mention should be made of the acclaimed erudite scholar Jalāl ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī (d. 1505). Nicknamed the jurist of love (*faqīh al-ḥubb*), aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī is reported to have written at least twenty-three treatises on various aspects of erotology.[83] Arguably the most prolific erotology writer from the Arab-Muslim tradition, aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī is credited with having written, though the authorship is disputed, *Kitāb al-īḍāḥ fī ʿilm an-nikāḥ* (An Exposition on the Science of Sexual Intercourse[84]). The lithograph begins with aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī exclaiming, "Praise be to the Lord Who adorned the virginal bosom with breasts and Who made the thighs of women anvils for the spear handles of men!"[85]

To the same amiable polymath are also ascribed *Nawāḍir al-ayk fī maʿrifat an-nayk* (Blossoms of the Jungle in Knowledge of Sex), an abstract of his earlier work entitled, *Kitāb al-wishāḥ fī fawāʾid an-nikāḥ* (Book of the Sash on the Benefits of Sexual Intercourse). In a three volume study of aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī's erotic works, academic Jūrj Kadr mentioned that aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī also wrote; *Rashf az-zulāl min as-siḥr al-ḥalāl* (The Sipping of the Pure Water of Lawful Charm), *al-Ayk fī an-nayk* (The Jungle of Sexual Intercourse), *Shaqāʾiq al-utrunj fī daqāʾiq al-ghunj* (Halves of the Lemon Regarding the Intricacies of Coquetry) and *Nuzhat al-ʿumr fī at-tafḍīl bayn al-bīḍ wa as-sūd wa as-sumr* (Life's Excursion regarding the Merits of White, Black and Brown People).[86] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī was also a prominent writer on the literary genre of Prophetic medicine, which refers to a voluminous body of religious literature providing therapy based on a combination of herbal medicine and Prophetic traditions.[87] In *ar-Raḥmah fī aṭ-ṭibb wa al-ḥikmah*[88] (The Mercy – in Medicine and Wisdom), aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī devotes some chapters to therapeutics and sexual pharmacopoeia in order to aid those who are suffering from sexual illnesses.[89] Although the majority of aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī's works on erotology are yet to be translated into European languages, *The Medicine of the Prophet* by aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī has been published in English.[90] Like his predecessors, aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī's role was more of an editor and compiler than an original writer. Although aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī made use of the works of both Muslim and non-Muslim erotologists, he relied upon the sacred texts as the ultimate source for his investigation. Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī's place in the Arab-Muslim erotological tradition cannot be underestimated, as his works provide a wonderful insight into the methodology of studying a sensitive topic like sensuality that is still grounded in the religious tradition.

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[82] Reilly, 2010, p. 34

[83] Newman, 2014, p. 47. For a discussion of aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī's erotological and erotic works, see H. Jughām, 2001

[84] Although *nikāḥ* means marriage, its root meaning is sexual intercourse. Ed.

[85] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 1987, p. 1

[86] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, pp. 41-43, Newman, 2014, pp. 170-172

[87] Newman, 2014, p. 22

[88] Ḥājī Khalīfa says in *Kashf aẓ-ẓunūn* that its author was Mahdī ibn ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm aṣ-Ṣubayrī al-Yamanī. He remarks that it is a useful book. Ed.

[89] Newman, 2014, p. 22-

Although not a work of erotology in and of itself, Abū Hamid al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) *Iḥyā' ʿulūm ad-dīn* (The Revival of the Sciences of the Dīn) is very influential on sexual ethics from a religious perspective.[91] Fourteenth century scholar Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 1406) is another prominent traditionalist writer on sexual ethics. He discusses in great detail the wisdoms and pleasures of copulation in *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn wa nuzhat al-mushtāqīn* (The Garden of Lovers and Excursion of the Yearning). Nineteenth century scholar, Usman don Fodio (d. 1804), arguably West Africa's most celebrated scholar, wrote extensively about sexual ethics and stressed the importance of the woman's right to intercourse in his acclaimed work *Ihyā' as-sunnah* (Reviving the Sunnah). Don Fodio's works remain very influential amongst Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa. Don Fodio wrote:

> Sexual intercourse while being watched is a prohibited innovation for the act is private and intimate and involves the intimate parts of the body which should be covered. Also, approaching the wife for sex, suddenly, before fondling and playing with her in preparation for intimacy is a prohibited innovation. Also, grunting noises and worthless speech during sexual intercourse is a prohibited innovation. Performing the sex act in the anus of the woman is also a well known prohibited innovation. It is even an undesirable innovation for a man to picture another woman in his mind while he is having sex with his wife. This makes him think he is having sex with the other woman! The same rule would apply for the woman for she will imagine that the other man is having sex with her. Also, if the husband informs other people about what went on in his bed between himself and his wife, this is an undesirable innovation for it leads to making the other men desire the woman. The same would

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[90] The translation was edited by British Muslim author Aḥmad Thomson.

[91] Burton, 2008, p. 175

> apply to a woman who described her night with her husband to other women.[92]

Since the latter part of the twentieth century, traditionalist Muslim writers have begun to address sexual matters in the form of jurisprudential marriage manuals rather than in the style of the classic erotology treatises. Maḥmūd Mahdī al-Istānbūlī's *Tuḥfat al-ʿarūs*[93] *aw az-zawāj al-islāmī as-saʿīd* (The Bridegroom's Gift or the Happy Islamic Marriage) is an example of such a manual to explain "the way to a happy marital life."[94] The book consists of Qur'ānic *āyats* and authentic Prophetic traditions on the subject. Al-Istānbūlī openly discusses sexual relations between married couples because "sexual satisfaction may be the fruit of their physical and spiritual unity."[95] British-born traditionally-trained scholar Muḥammad ibn Adam al-Kawtharī recently authored *Islamic Guide to Sexual Relations*, an interesting jurisprudential discussion of sexual intimacy.

Decline of Erotology

The heyday of the Arab-Muslim erotological tradition was between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, after which it tapered off considerably, with only a few isolated works in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The nineteenth century marked the end of the literary genre, which completely disappeared in the early twentieth century. Due to a puritanical concept of modesty afflicting Muslims, sexual studies were soon regarded as taboo and seen as shameful in many Muslim societies. According to Patrick Franke, the development of Western science was at the root of the decay of erotology, "As it is generally known, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a global advance of modern Western scientific concepts which also had far-reaching effects on the scientific sphere of the Islamic world. Just as traditional Graeco-Arabic medicine, having been dominant in the Islamic world for centuries was superseded in this period almost everywhere by modern Western medicine, *ʿilm al-bāh*, being part of the scientific tradition, lost ground to the Western *scientia sexualis*. In Islamic marriage manuals published after World War II, such as *The Gift of the Bride of the Happy Islamic Marriage* (*Tuḥfat al-ʿarūs aw az-zawāj al-islāmī as-saʿīd*) by Mahdī al-Istānbūlī (d. 1960), the term *bāh* no longer surfaces, *jins* now being the keyword for discussing sexual questions of marriage. The introduction of the term *jins* as a translation for 'sex, sexuality' into several Islamic languages (Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Urdu), the circumstances and exact timing of which are questions for further research, was not a mere matter of words. Rather it entailed the adoption of a whole set of epistemological concepts pertaining to body, desire and emotion. Whereas in *ʿilm al-bāh* the female body was construed over centuries as an organism featuring exactly the same physiological processes as its male counterpart, including ejaculation (*inzāl*), the use of the word *jins* was concomitant with the adoption of the modern Western 'two-sex-model', emphasizing the fundamental biological differences between the male and female sexes. As in the West, anxieties about sexual frigidity (*burūd jinsī*) were now disseminated in Islamic countries, hormones and nervous illnesses were made responsible for excessive female desire, and passionate attraction to boys was stigmatized as sexual perversion (*shudhūdh jinsī*)."[96]

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[92] Taher, 1989, p. 208, Quick, 2007, p. 104

[93] *ʿArūs* may be both bridegroom and bride.

[94] Al-Istambulli, 1999, p. 10

[95] Al-Istanbuli, 1999, p. 14

The abolition of slavery has also been cited as a reason for the demise of erotology. Classic Arabic erotological literature relied to a considerable extent on the institution of slave concubinage, and erotologists may have taken for granted that their male readers had concubines or could at least purchase one if they wanted.[97] Since slavery was gradually abolished in Muslim countries starting in the late nineteenth century, this avenue for the practice of erotology teachings was no longer available. Professor Newman cited the influence of Christian missionaries on Muslim sexual ethics as another cause for the decline of erotology. The Victorian Christian understanding of morality soon became embedded in Muslim societies and the discussion of sexual matters came to be considered taboo.[98] Franke concurred with this and said,

> "Wherever the teachings of *ʿilm al-bāh* have survived the cataclysms caused by the Western intellectual invasion, they have done so only in a filtered or transformed version. True, the many commercial editions of classical *bāh*-books published in the last years show that the textual products of this discipline still have a public in Muslim

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[96] Franke, Patrick, 2012, *Before scientia sexualis in Islamic culture: ʿilm al-bāh between erotology, medicine and pornography*, in Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture, Vol. 18, Issue 2, pp. 169 The concept *shudhūdh jinsī* is of Western origin. See Khaled El- Rouayheb's discussion of the development of the term in *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, 2005, pp. 159-161

[97] Al-Maghribī, 2007, pp. 118–143

[98] Newman, 2014, p. 49.

countries today, but the recent interest in this literature seems not to be a scientific one anymore."[99]

As the erotology tradition began to decline in the Muslim world, a new science dedicated to the study of human sexuality (*scientia sexualis*) arose in nineteenth century Europe. The 'Age of Enlightenment' ushered in a vigorous and increasingly secularised discussion of sexual ethics and produced the first programmes of public and private sex education as well as new classifications and documentations of sexual behaviour. The concept of a theoretical scientific and scholarly effort devoted to sex was first proposed by the Berlin dermatologist Iwan Bloch (d. 1922), who also coined the new term for it: *sexualwissenschaft,* literally translated as sexual science but better translated as sexology.[100] Credited as the father of sexology, Bloch is also well-known for his inclusion of historical and anthropological data when researching sex and sexuality and he is among the first to consider the social and cultural implications of and influences on sex.[101] Blaming Christianity for modern misogyny, Bloch nevertheless differed from many later secular sexologists in that he considered religion and historical religious texts as important sources for research on sexuality.

German physician and sexologist, Magnus Hirschfeld (d. 1935), who founded the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute of Sexology) during the years of the Weimar Republic is also credited as being the father of sexology. The Institute had been a space for research, debate and the treatment of sexual problems; it was also the headquarters of Hirschfeld's campaign to end discrimination against homosexuals and a destination for leading intellectuals including Christopher Isherwood, W H Auden and André Gide. The Institute and its libraries was later destroyed by Adolf Hitler's Nazi government in the 1930s as part of its censorship program.[102] The legacy of Hirschfeld's Institute and ideas is kept alive by organisations such as the Wellcome Library in London, England and the Kinsey Institute in Indiana, United States, that adopts a policy that reflects "the ambitions of the early sexologists to observe, gather and record information on human sexuality without judgement."[103]

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[99] Franke, 2012, p. 169

[100] The term was first translated as "sexual science," but this is somewhat misleading, since the German Wissenschaft comprises both natural sciences and humanities. The translation as "sexology" is therefore preferable, because the Greek root *logos*, from which *-ology* derives, traditionally refers to all powers of reason and therefore to any rational study and to organised knowledge of any kind. Thus, the Latin-Greek hybrid "sexology", just as the German original, simply refers to the theoretical study of sex.

[101] Reiss, 1982, pp. 97-113

[102] El Feki et. Al, 2014, *The Institute of Sexology*, pp. 4-5

Former professor of biology, Albert Kinsey (d. 1956), is arguably the most influential person in the field of sexology. Kinsey's theories regarding female sexuality and sexual orientation were considered groundbreaking in the Western world. Through his efforts to develop and expand upon his scientific interest in sexual behaviour, Kinsey founded the Institute for Sex Research in America where he conducted personal interviews with men and women in order to learn about human sexual behaviour. Kinsey's work was fundamentally important in raising social awareness of female sexuality and the formulation of the study of human sexuality as an academic discipline. The publication of British biologist Alex Comfort's (d. 2000) landmark illustrated sex manual, *The Joy of Sex: A Gourmet Guide to Lovemaking,* in 1976 was an important contribution to human development and sexuality in the Western world. *The Joy of Sex* is said to have taken the Western world from an era of "silence and shame about sexuality to one of greater openness and discussion." In the follow up book, *More Joy of Sex: A Lovemaking Companion to The Joy of Sex;* Comfort said that the prudish attitude of white Europeans prevented them from excelling in the art of lovemaking in the way that black people do, which he wanted his (primarily white) readers to learn:

> Where black people of both sexes undoubtedly do score sexually is that Black culture has never lost its body sense as White has and isn't physically uptight. Its body language is much freer and accordingly many black people are better at sex than anxious Wasps [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant][104] for the same reason that they dance much better. Some degree of soul, rhythm, and body sense is something we others [i.e. white people] need to relearn."[105]

Differences between Erotology and Sexology

Although often used interchangeably with sexology, erotology differs from it in a number of ways. Proponents of sexology argue that sexology is an objective and scientific study of human sexuality whereas erotology, they argue, is subjective and without scientific evidence. The notion that the Western study of human sexuality, in contrast to previous cultures' studies, is 'scientific' was proposed by French philosopher Michael Foucault in *Histoire de la sexualité* (The History of Sexuality), a three volume study of sexuality in the Western world. Foucault classified previous erotological studies as being *ars erotica* (erotic art) whereas Western sexology was *scientia sexualis* (the science of sexuality). Foucault's claim, that *scientia sexualis* is an intellectual pursuit of the study of human sexuality whereas *ars erotica* is a sensual pursuit speaking from personal experience, implies that sexology is a superior discipline which has evolved far beyond its predecessor's primitive nature.[106] It is not surprising that Foucault advocated his own research methods as being superior to others. The erotologists of ancient Greece, India and the Arab speaking world would probably also have claimed that their approach to the study of human sexuality was superior to the secular Western sexologists' 'scientific' approach.

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[103] El Feki et. al, 2014, *The Institute of Sexology*, p. 10

[104] Wasp refers to an upper or middle-class white Protestant, considered to be a member of the most powerful group in society.

[105] Comfort, 1993. p. 91

It can be argued that erotology is actually superior as a discipline to sexology as it consists of both subjective and objective study of human sexuality. Erotology encompasses the [sexologists'] scientific research as well as the sacred knowledge, morals and ethics found in religious and philosophical texts.

Despite the claims of many sexologists that sexology is objective and 'without judgement,' many of the influential sexologists who pioneered the discipline such as Magnus Hirschfeld and Albert Kinsey reportedly engaged in same-sex relationships, and unsurprisingly were keen advocates for homosexuality. Recently their research methods have been called into question by studies which have shown that the acclaimed sexologists' research methods do not appear to be as scientifically objective as many of their supporters claim. James H. Jones, author of *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life* and British psychiatrist Theodore Dalrymple, amongst others, have speculated that Hirschfeld and Kinsey's findings were driven by their sexual needs. In spite of the claims made by western sexologists of their alleged neutrality and objectivity, the ideal of complete objectivity on the part of researchers have largely been debunked in the social sciences. As a heterosexual Muslim male of West African origin, it would be naive of me to think that my religious beliefs and West African cultural upbringing would not influence my analysis of sexuality. Similar critiques have rarely, if ever, been made of white homosexual sexologists. Scholarly production is invariably inseparable from the researcher's personal identity, belief and personal interests. To say otherwise would be disingenuous.

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[106] Newman, 2014, p. 41

Sexology also lacks the ethics and morality that erotologists derived from religious and philosophical sources in order to gain a holistic understanding of human sexuality. Co-authors on sexual love from a Biblical perspective, Tim and Beverly LaHaye said,

> Teaching sex education without moral principles is like pouring gasoline on a fire.[107]

After all, in spite of the modern world's advances in medicine and technology, science has not been able to provide answers for some of the most fundamental ethical questions about human sexuality.

Classical Arabic – the Language of Sexual Love

In his magisterial eleventh century study of Arabic philology, *Fiqh al-lugha wa sirr al-ᶜarabiyya*, Abū Isḥāq ath-Thaᶜālabī said that there are at least a hundred synonyms for sexual intercourse in the Arabic language. In his dictionary *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, lexicographer Majd ad-Dīn al-Fayrūzābādī states that there are over four hundred synonyms and Ibn al-Qiṭā ᶜ found a thousand. Some of the most popular Arabic words used for sexual intercourse in either a literal or metaphoric sense are: *bāh* (coition), *nikāḥ* (marriage and sexual intercourse), *buḍᶜ* (a sexual organ or sexual intercourse), *jimāᶜ* (sexual intercourse), *mujāmaᶜa* (lovemaking), *nayk* (sex)[108], *ᶜusayla* (honey), *firāsh* (bed), *lams* (touch), *waṭ'* (copulation), *mubāshara* (intimacy and embrace), *ityān* (union), *ghashsha* (covering), *rafath* (approach), *zinā (*adornment*)*, *waqᶜ* (fall).

In *al-Muwāfaqāt*, prominent Andalusian legal theoretician and grammarian Abū Isḥāq ash-Shāṭibī, stresses the importance of comprehending the multiple connotations and meanings of Arabic words rather than just apparent and literal senses. He argued that a lack of familiarity with classical Arabic along with its linguistic nuances and ancillary sciences would seriously hamper one's understanding of Islam and its two textual sources, the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.[109] The seriousness of this cannot be underestimated, particularly in modern times with the prevalent misinterpretation of Islam's sacred sources. In an academic journal investigating Qur'ānic sexual euphemisms, Professor Abdel Haleem said that misrepresentation and misinterpretation of these euphemisms happens primarily by way of three mechanisms:

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[107] LaHaye, 1998, p. 73

[108] An explicit word for sexual intercourse and considered a vulgar word by some and thus often translated as 'fuck'.

[109] "Whilst it is usual to find the Qur'ān and the Sunnah referred to as the two main sources of the Sacred Law, one frequently finds the word *ḥadīth* substituted for the word sunnah or used interchangeably with it. The *ḥadīth* (prophetic traditions) is quite distinct from the Sunnah. Today however (and indeed since the time of Imam Ash-Shafi'i) this distinction has largely been ignored, and it is common to find the word Sunnah equated with *ḥadīth* both by Muslims and non-Muslims. According to Imam Mālik ibn Anas and

> (i) wrenching a short statement out of its textual context; (ii) cutting a statement off from its social and cultural context; and (iii) lack of regard for the style of the Qur'ān in treating various subjects.[110]

It is important that anyone interested in grasping Islam authentically should familiarise himself or herself with some of the rhetorical devices used in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* in order to understand and appreciate such expressions in the way they were understood by the early Muslims.[111] A few examples of the use of words for sexual organs are shown below.

SEXUAL ORGANS

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said in *The Perfumed Garden:*

> In Arabic, the two basic names for the male sexual organ are: stud (*kamara*)[112] and standard (*dhakar*). The latter word is derived from the word meaning the reputation or standing (*dhikr*) of a man. If a man's penis suffers some serious mishap – amputation or chronic impotence, for example – the Arabs say that the man's standing in the world has died and his issue has been severed. When a man dies, it is said metaphorically that his penis (*dhakar*) has fallen and his time is up.[113]

Linguistically the word, *farj* (private parts) means a gap or an opening as

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many of the early jurists of Madinah, the Sunnah is the normative pattern of life established by the Prophet. Whereas the *ḥadīth* is the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad made up of his words, actions and approvals. Thus, not every *ḥadīth* is an established Sunnah in the Sacred Law." See Yasin Dutton's *The Origins of Islamic Law: The Qur'an, the Muwaṭṭa' and Madinan 'Amal* and *Original Islam: Mālik and the madhab of Madina*

[110] See M.A.S Abdel Haleem,, 2011, "Euphemism in the Qur'ān: A Case Study of Marital Relations as Depicted in Q. 2:222-3" in *Journal of* Qur'ānic *Studies*, Volume 13, p. 125

[111] The interpretation of the sacred texts of Islam by their early custodians, the Companions, Followers and the Followers of the Followers, is considered the most accurate in Sunni Islam.

[112] *Kamara* is "the *head* [or *glans*] *of the penis*"... Hence, by synecdoche, The *penis*, altogether." See Edward Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*.

[113] An-Nafzāwī, (translated by Jim Colville) 1999, p. 39.

in, "I discovered a gap (*farj*) in the mountainside." The Qur'ān uses the term to refer to both the male and female private parts in the expression 'guard the private parts' (*ḥifz al-farj*). Al-Baghawī related in his exegesis of the Qur'ān;

> Abū al-'Aliyyah said, "Every time guarding the private parts (*ḥifz al-farj*) is mentioned in the Qur'ān it relates to illicit sexual intercourse (*zinā*) and *ḥarām* (forbidden) sexual practices, except in chapter (*sūrah*) twenty four, verse (*ayāh*) thirty. For in this instance it literally relates to the sexual organs so one's eye does not look at something prohibited."[114]

The literal word for the sexual organ was also used figuratively in *ḥadīth* literature to refer to sexual intercourse:

> "There are going to be people from my community (*ummah*) who will make the vagina (*ḥirr*) lawful."[115]

Ḥadīth specialist Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī said in his commentary that *ḥirr* in this *ḥadīth* means fornication (*zinā*).[116]

> "The stipulations most entitled to be abided by are those with which the private parts (*furūj*) have become lawful to you."[117]

The Prophet's ﷺ usage of the word private parts is in reference to the fact that the marriage contract permits sexual relations between the married couple.

> "When the two circumcised parts meets, and the tip of the penis disappears, purificatory bath (*ghusl*) becomes obligatory."[118]

Ibn Ḥajar said, "What is meant by the dual form in the phrase "*the two circumcised parts*" is the circumcised genitals of the man and the woman respectively."[119]

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114 Al-Baghawī, 2002, p. 903.

115 Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-ashribah* – the Book of Drinks, 5590.

116 Ibn Ḥajar, 2008, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, vol. 3 p. 3998.

117 An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ* – the Book of Marriage, 3281, 3282, al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ* – the Book of Marriage, 5151

118 *"When the two circumcised parts meet, and the tip of the penis disappears purificatory bath (ghusl) becomes obligatory."* Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭahārah wa sunanihā* – the Book of Purification and its Customary Practices, no, 611. Another tradition states, *"When the circumcised part touches the other circumcised part, purificatory bath (ghusl) becomes obligatory."* Mālik, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭahārah* – the Book of Purification, no. 103.

119 See Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-bārī*.

HONEY

"Indeed honey (*ʿusaylah*) is sexual intercourse!"[120]

Honey in Classical Arabic can imply eroticism and fertility. The Arabic phrase *maḍrib ʿasalah*, which consists of the terms *maḍrib* (place, spot) and *ʿasalah* (honey), is a euphemism for '*the place of injection of sperm*,' or '*the source from which one springs; origin, ancestry* or *parentage*.'[121] This euphemism appears to be based on the form that is common to both honey and sperm, that both are sticky liquids, and on the association between the delight of sexual intercourse and the taste of honey, as the North African lexicographer, Ibn Manẓūr mentions in *Lisān al-ʿArab*. The euphemism may also be associated with bees' pollination of flowers by carrying and spreading pollen among them as they suck their nectar.[122] An authentic Prophetic tradition clearly denotes the sexual meaning of *ʿusaylah* (a diminutive of *ʿasl*), when the Prophet ﷺ said to a woman who desired to be divorced from her husband, who had not consummated the marriage with her, so that she could remarry her former husband, "No [you must remain with your present husband] until you taste his honey and he tastes your honey."[123] In a *ḥadīth* related by Aḥmad and an-Nasāʾī, the Prophet ﷺ clarified the meaning of the term *ʿusaylah* when he said, "Indeed honey (*ʿusaylah*) is sexual intercourse (*jimāʿ*)!"[124] British lexicographer Edward William Lane commented that *ʿusaylah* can also be used to mean the male and female sexual fluids, as well as deliciousness or sweetness. When the term is used in the dual form, it denotes the male and female genital organs because they are the means of experiencing delight.[125] Also, honey bears the signification of righteousness; the phrase, *dhūʿasl* (having honey), means someone who has a righteous, good, proper action attributable to him, for which the praise of him is deemed sweet.[126]

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[120] Ibn Kathīr narrated in his commentary of sūrah 2, *āyat* 30 that Aḥmad and an-Nasāʾ related this prophetic tradition. Ibn Kathīr, 2000, p. 294.

[121] See Edward Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*.

[122] Sumi, 2004, p. 77.

[123] Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ* – the Book of Marriage, 1433 a. She had been divorced irrevocably and thus could only remarry her former husband after consummation of a second marriage and a subsequent divorce. Nothing precluded her obtaining a divorce from her second husband if there were reasonable grounds for that. Ed.

[124] Ibn Kathīr, 2000, p. 294.

[125] Stetkevych, 2002, p. 14.

[126] Sumi, 2004, p. 77.

The Structure of the Book

Since the last of the great traditionalist-themed erotology works was written by aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī over six hundred years ago, I felt that the composition of a book on erotology from the perspective of Islam is much needed. As a British-born Muslim of Yoruba descent, I also wanted to make mention of the contribution of Yoruba people and other sub-Saharan African ethnic groups towards this topic, which is conspicuously absent from the corpus of classic erotology works.[127] In this exposition of Islamic sexuality and erotology, I will discuss each topic briefly that does not call for significant elaboration, supplementation or addition. The book follows the style of composition of classic Eastern and Afro-Arab love texts like the *Kama Sutra* and aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī's erotology treatises. I have adopted the method of traditionalist-erotologists who preceded me, condensing matters into concise chapters and relying upon the Qur'ān and Sunnah as the ultimate authority in my investigation. Unlike the Qur'ān, the authenticity of some *ḥadīth*s are open to debate, therefore I have relied upon the acumen of *ḥadīth* specialists for the verification of Prophetic traditions cited.[128] As for the interpretation of Islam's sacred texts, I have made reference to the works of traditional Sunni Muslim scholars. I have omitted much of the physiognomic and aphrodisiacal material mentioned in many of the classical erotology works except that derived from sacred sources. In addition to incorporating the topics I found in the works of the early erotologists, I have also included a few additional topics in the art of lovemaking that I felt were relevant for the modern-day reader.

Given the vast scope of this topic, I have confined myself to matters that would not weary the listener or strain the reader's enthusiasm. I have endeavoured to articulate my findings in a relaxed manner, including some humorous anecdotes with moral lessons.[129] The book itself is divided into two parts: part one presents a critical examination of sexual ethics, and part two consists of a concise treatise on the art of seduction and lovemaking. Each part consists of chapters of variable lengths which I shall now elaborate on.

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[127] Yoruba people are an ethnic group of southwestern Nigeria and southern Benin. Outside of Africa, a large number of Yoruba people are found in the United Kingdom, United States of America and Brazil.

[128] Some of the Prophetic traditions cited are weak. There is a consensus among people knowledgeable of *ḥadīth* that it is permissible to use weak *ḥadīth* for areas that are considered *faḍā'il* or meritorious rather than those that pertain to fundamental obligations. Ed.

[129] Maghen, 2005, p. x

The opening chapter examines the Islamic concept of modesty. Chapter two looks at sexual desire and offers practical advice on mastering sexual desire. Chapter three addresses the importance of beautification for sexual attraction. Chapter four explores the concept of sexual love, its nature, signs and its manifestation in marriage. A brief discussion on fidelity is presented in chapter five and on infidelity in chapter six. The physical pleasures of the Garden form the last chapter of part one. Part two commences with a chapter on the importance of studying erotology. The following chapter (nine) is dedicated to the benefits of sexual intercourse. Qualities that are desirable in men and women are enumerated in chapters ten and eleven respectively. Preparation for copulation is treated in chapter twelve. Chapter thirteen presents a brief guide to some basic sensual massage techniques to enhance the experience of lovemaking. Mental, verbal and physical foreplay are examined in chapter fourteen. Chapter fifteen discusses the permissibility of oral stimulation in the Sacred Law and presents some techniques for cunnilingus and fellatio. Chapter sixteen is dedicated to lovemaking positions. Orgasm is the topic of chapter seventeen. The book concludes with a discussion on the superiority of the love of Allah.

Nothing I have said thus far, or will say in the remainder of this work, should be construed as portraying Islam as in any way permissive with respect to illicit sexual relations. Whilst the sacred texts of Islam condone and even extol sexual activity within the proper bounds, those same texts condemn and threaten with dire retribution – in this world and the Hereafter – those who allow their desires to get the better of them and to lead them to fornication or adultery.

Although a comprehensive study, this book is by no means exhaustive, for that is certainly beyond the scope of any work. Rather it is a personal endeavour to discuss matters relating to sexuality that most pertain to the believer in Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. I hope this book can contribute towards the revival of erotology and further studies on sexuality within a God-conscious framework. I ask Allah to give the reader and me the best of this world and the next. Indeed Allah shows mercy to whomever He wills.[130]

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[130] Revival is defined as: an instance of something becoming important again, a restoration to consciousness, or an improvement in the condition, strength, or fortunes of something. All three definitions are what is intended by the revival of erotology and not to renew or relive the past of Islamic history.

Any benefit or good in this book is from the bounty of Allah and any errors or inconsistencies with the *dīn* of Islam are mine alone.

HABEEB AKANDE

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

Modesty (*ḥayā'*)

"Modesty (*ḥayā'*) is part of faith (*īmān*)."[131]

Modesty and Prudery

Modesty is defined as "behaviour, manner or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency."[132] Prudery is a noun, derived from the word "prude". The origin of the word dates back to the early eighteenth century, French word *prudefemme*, the feminine of *pud'homme* (good man and true) from the word *prou* (worthy). A prude is "defined as a person who is or claims to be easily shocked by matters relating to sex or nudity."[133] According to another definition, a prude is "a person who is excessively or priggishly attentive to propriety or decorum." The word is often used to describe a woman who displays excessive modesty.[134] In Arabic *ḥayā'* means shame, modesty, bashfulness and repentance. *Ḥayā'* (modesty) differs from prudery, which the 'Taste of Honey' *ḥadīth* illustrates, as we shall now examine.

The 'Taste of Honey' *Ḥadīth*

"...you taste his honey and he tastes your honey."[135]

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[131] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

[132] Oxford Dictionary

[133] Oxford Dictionary.

[134] Merriam Webster dictionary

[135] Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ* – the Book of Marriage, 1433 a.

BACKGROUND OF THE *ḤADĪTH*

Before Islam some of the Arabs used to divorce women repeatedly on a whim and then remarry them. In order to put an end to this practice, in the Qur'ān Allah legislated that if a husband divorces his wife irrevocably[136], the woman becomes prohibited for him to remarry, unless she obtains a divorce from another man in a subsequent marriage,

> *"If a husband re-divorces his wife after the second divorce, she will not be lawful for him until she has taken another husband; if that one divorces her, there will be no blame if she and the first husband return to one another, provided they feel that they can keep within the bounds set by Allah."*[137]

The Prophet ﷺ clarified in the 'Taste of Honey' *ḥadīth* that the marriage to the second husband must be consummated in order to be considered valid. The incident was related by ʿĀ'ishāh ؓ, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, with some variations in the narrations.

NARRATIONS BY ʿĀ'ISHĀH

> ʿĀ'ishāh ؓ said, "A man divorced his wife and she married another man who later divorced her. The man had something similar to the fringe [of a garment] (*hudbah*)[138], for he was not able to give her that which she wanted. So he did not wait for long until he divorced her. She then went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, 'Messenger of Allah! My [first] husband divorced me and then I married another man who entered upon me to consummate the marriage but he only had like the fringe [of a garment]. He did not approach me except once during which he benefited nothing from me. So am I permitted to [remarry] my first husband?' The Messenger of Allah said, 'No you are not permitted to marry your first husband until the other tastes your honey and you taste his honey.'"[139]

In another narration related by Muslim on the authority of ʿĀ'ishāh ؓ:

> The wife of Rifaʿāh came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: "I was married to Rifaʿāh but he divorced me, making my divorce irrevocable. Afterwards I married ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn az-Zubayr,

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[136] i.e. three times or using such expressions as denote an irrevocable divorce. Ed.

[137] Al-Baqarah 2: 229-230.

[138] Meaning: he had a small penis or was impotent.

[139] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭalāq* – the Book of Divorce, 5265, Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭalāq* – the Book of Divorce, 2309.

> but all he possesses is like the fringe of a garment." Thereupon the Messenger of Allah smiled, and said: "Do you wish to return to Rifaʿāh? You cannot. Not until you taste his honey and he tastes your honey."
>
> Abū Bakr was at that time near him [i.e. the Prophet ﷺ] and Khālid ibn Saʿīd was at the door waiting for permission to enter, and he called out, "Abū Bakr, do you hear what she is saying openly in the presence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?!"[140]

Narration by ʿIkrimah from ʿĀ'ishāh

> Rifa ʿāh divorced his wife whereupon ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn az-Zubayr al-Quraẓī married her. ʿĀ'ishāh said that the lady was wearing a green veil and complained to her [ʿĀ'ishāh] about her husband and showed her a green mark on her skin caused by a beating. When the Messenger of Allah came – and it was the habit of women to support each other – ʿĀ'ishāh said, "I have not seen any women suffering as much as the believing women! Her skin is greener than her clothes!" [ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān] heard that she had gone to the Messenger of Allah, so he came with two sons of his from another wife. The woman said, "By Allah! I have done no wrong to him but that he is as useless to me as this," holding and showing the fringe of her garment. ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān responded, "By Allah! O Messenger of Allah! She has told a lie! I am very strong and can satisfy her but she is disobedient because she wants to go back to Rifaʿāh." The Messenger of Allah said to her, "If that is the case, then know that [Rifaʿāh] is not *ḥalāl* for you unless [ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān] has tasted your honey."

[The Prophet ﷺ] saw two boys with [ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān], so he asked [him], 'Are these your sons?' [ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān] replied, 'Yes.' So [the Prophet ﷺ] said [to the woman], "You claim what you claim [i.e. that he is impotent], but by Allah, these boys resemble him more than a crow resembles another crow."[141]

COMMENTARY

The Prophet's ﷺ acknowledgement demonstrates that he did not disapprove of the lady's question, nor consider it as immodest. He ﷺ was actually amused by her 'fringe of a garment' euphemism and responded with his own delicate euphemism, indicating that he was not shocked or appalled by the sexual nature of her complaint. An-Nawawi said, "The expression of the Prophet ﷺ 'not until you taste his honey and he tastes your honey' is a metaphor (*kināyah*) for sexual intercourse, likening its pleasure to the pleasure and sweetness of honey."[142] Ibn Ḥajar said, "The majority of scholars said [the expression] *dhuq al-ʿusaylah* (taste the honey) is a metaphor for sexual intercourse, which is the entering of the head of the man's penis into the woman's vagina."[143] Abū ʿUbayd said, "ʿ*Usaylah* (a diminutive of ʿ*asl* 'honey') is the pleasure of sexual intercourse. The Arabs used to name anything they found pleasurable 'honey'."[144] Al-Azharī said, "The soundest opinion is that *'honey'* (ʿ*usaylah*) means the sweetness of intercourse, which occurs when the head of the penis enters the vagina (*taghīb al-hashafah fi al-farj*)."[145] The Prophet ﷺ himself clarified the meaning of the term ʿ*usaylah* in a prophetic tradition related by Aḥmad and an-Nasā'ī in which he was reported to have said, "Indeed honey (ʿ*usaylah*) is sexual intercourse (*jimāʿ*)!"[146]

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[140] Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ* – the Book of Marriage, 1433 a.

[141] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭalāq* – the Book of Divorce, 5260.

Some of the female Companions also held conservative views on modesty. ʿĀ'ishah relates:

> I used to look down upon those women who had given themselves [in marriage] to the Messenger of Allah and I used to say, "Can a woman give herself?"[147] But when Allah revealed, '*You may refrain from any of them you will and keep close to you any of them you will. And if you desire any you have left alone, there is nothing wrong in that,*'[148] I said [to the Prophet ﷺ], 'I see that your Lord hastens to fulfil your desires.'"[149]

Thābit al-Bunānī narrated:

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[142] An-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*, p. 896.

[143] Ibn Ḥajar, 2008, vol. 3. 3818.

[144] Ibn Ḥajar, 2008, vol. 3, p. 3818.

[145] Ibn Ḥajar, 2008, vol. 3, p. 3818.

[146] Ibn Kathīr, 2000, p. 294.

[147] The question of ʿĀ'ishah ﵂ is on the fiqh of the case, i.e. where is the woman's guardian? since a woman may not be married without the presence and agreement of her father or guardian. But this was clarified by the *āyat* in Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, which included, "*O Prophet! We have made halal for you:... and any believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet if the Prophet desires to marry her: exclusively for you as opposed to the rest of the believers.*" (al-Aḥzāb 33:50) Ed.

[148] Al-Aḥzāb 33:51.

[149] Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ – the Book of Marriage, 3453;* an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ – the Book of Marriage, 3199.*

> "I was with Anas while his daughter was with him. Anas said, 'A woman came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and offered herself to him [in marriage], saying, "Messenger of Allah, have you any need of me?"' Then Anas' daughter remarked, 'How little shame she had! Shame! Shame!' Anas said [to his daughter], 'She was better than you; she desired the Prophet ﷺ, so she offered herself [in marriage] to him.'"[150]

In another tradition which al-Bayhaqī narrated in *ad-Dalā'il:*

> On the authority of Ibn ʿUmar there is that a woman went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "I am a Muslim woman and I have a husband in my house who is like a woman [i.e. he did not have intercourse with her]." The Prophet ﷺ summoned her husband and said, "Why is your wife saying this?" The man replied, "By the One who has honoured you, my head has not dried from her.[151]" She said, "He hasn't been with me for a month!" The Prophet ﷺ called them both and supplicated, "O Allah, bring them together and make them love one another."[152]

As was the case in the 'Taste of Honey' *ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ did not rebuke the woman for complaining about her husband's lack of sexual relations with her but supplicated to his Lord to bestow love in their hearts for one another. Such *ḥadīth*s illustrate that the Prophet ﷺ was not prudish or excessively modest to the extent of shunning sexual matters. Allah, exalted is He, says: "*But Allah is not reticent with the truth.*"[153]

Interpretation of Modesty

"Modesty *(ḥayā')* does not produce but goodness."[154]

Although modesty is a praiseworthy quality, its manifestation has been interpreted differently by Muslims due to differing customs and social norms. Fourteenth century explorer Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's chronicles provide an interesting insight into the various interpretations of modesty amongst Muslims in that period. A Moroccan native of Berber origin, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah was an accomplished travel writer and chronicler who travelled to various parts of the Muslim world. A recurring theme in Ibn Baṭṭūṭah chronicles is the modesty, or lack thereof he experienced amongst Muslim women he encountered during his travels. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah praised the veiled women of Makkah for their piety and beauty. On the other hand, in his travels to 'Black Africa' (*as-sūdān*), Ibn Baṭṭūṭah made mention of the culture shock he experienced from some religious West African Muslims' perceptions of modesty. For example, he related about Muslims from the tribe of Massufah:

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[150] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ – the Book of Marriage, 5120; an-Nasā'ī, Kitāb an-nikāḥ – the Book of Marriage,* 3250.

[151] Meaning that he had just performed a *ghusl* after having had sexual intercourse with her. Ed.

[152] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 156. In the version in *ad-Dalā'il* the Prophet ﷺ made the *du'ā* after enquiring if the woman hated her husband. Later, she met the Prophet ﷺ in the street and acknowledged that she was deeply in love with her husband. The Prophet ﷺ then said, "I bear witness that I am the Messenger of Allah." Ed.

[153] Al-Aḥzāb 33:53

[154] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

> They are strict in observing the prayers, studying the religious law, and memorizing the Qur'ān. Their women have no shame before men and do not veil themselves, yet they are punctilious about their prayers. Anyone who wants to take a wife among them does so, but they do not travel with their husbands, and even if one of them wished to, her family would prevent her. Women there have friends and companions among men outside the prohibited degrees for marriage, and in the same way men have women friends in the same category. A man goes into his house, finds his wife with her man friend, and does not disapprove.[155]

In another instance, when Ibn Baṭṭūṭah went to visit a jurist from the Mauritanian tribe of Oualata, he saw the man with "a young and exceptionally beautiful woman." When Ibn Baṭṭūṭah saw the woman, he hesitated and was about to retreat, but the woman laughed at him. The jurist said to Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, "Why are you turning back? She is my friend." Ibn Baṭṭūṭah was taken aback by the non-married men and women keeping each others' company, as such behaviour is not considered befitting for a Muslim who has *taqwā* (God-consciousness), according to the travel writer. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah relates another anecdote which indicates that his previous encounter was not an isolated incident:

> One day I called on one of the Massufah in whose company we had arrived, and found him sitting on a rug. In the middle of the room was a canopied couch and upon it was a woman with a man sitting and talking together.

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[155] Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (translated by Tim Mackintosh Smith), 2002, pp. 284-285

> I said to him, "Who is this woman?"
>
> He said, "She is my wife."
>
> I said, "What about the man who is with her?"
>
> He said, "He is her friend."
>
> I said, "Are you happy about this, you who have lived in our country and know the content of the religious law?"
>
> He said, "The companionship of women and men among us is a good thing and an agreeable practice, which causes no suspicion; they are not like the women of your country."
>
> I was astonished at his silliness. I left him and did not visit him again. Afterwards he invited me a number of times but I did not accept."[156]

In *ḥadīth* literature, it is narrated that the Prophet ﷺ forbade the seclusion together (*khulwah*) of individual unrelated men and women who are not married to each other, due to the sexual temptations that may arise and because of the opportunity for suspicion and gossip that it gives rise to:

> "No man should be alone with a woman except when there is a non-marriageable person (*maḥram*) with her."[157]
>
> "Never is a man alone with a woman but that *shayṭān* is present with them."[158]

Many traditional Muslim jurists have understood such Prophetic traditions to indicate that strict gender separation is required, unless there is an unavoidable necessity, such as visiting a medical professional of the opposite gender when one of the same gender is not available. There are, however, some Muslims jurists, as shown in the anecdote above, who understood such traditions to mean that seclusion with individuals of the opposite gender is prohibited when there is an actual threat of sexual temptation and not a potential threat. Thus, they do not see anything wrong with male and female companionship in certain instances.[159] Such an interpretation is that of a minority amongst traditional Sunni

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[156] Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (translated Tim Mackintosh Smith), 2002, p. 285.

[157] Muslim, *Kitāb al-ḥajj*, 1341.

[158] Al-Mundhirī, 2971; the *ḥadīth* is very weak. Related by aṭ-Ṭabarānī.

[159] Muslim women's dress and the amount of freedom they enjoy in traditional Muslim cultures depends on custom and circumstance.

Muslim jurists. Nevertheless this issue does demonstrate that both social norms and perceptions differ amongst Muslims in regards to what are considered to be religiously acceptable forms of modest behaviour and conduct. The same can be said about Muslim women's dress and ways in which the *ḥijāb*/veil should be worn. Muslims are not a monolithic group sharing a single interpretation of modesty. Like any other group there are some Muslims who are more conservative than others and others who are more liberal.

Shame and Eroticism

Eroticism is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "a quality that causes sexual feelings,"[160] and in the Oxford Dictionary as "the quality or character or being erotic."[161] Derived from the French word *érotique* and thus from the Greek word *eros* (sexual love), the adjective 'erotic' is defined as "relating to or tending to arouse sexual desire or excitement."[162] Interlinking modesty with eroticism underpins the Prophetic teachings:

> "Some words of the previous Prophets that people still find are: if you have no modesty (*ḥayā'*), do as you wish."[163]

The core term *ḥayā'* is variously translated as modesty or shame. Dictionaries define shame as "a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming or impropriety."[164] The Islamic concept of *ḥayā'*, however, is not too dissimilar to the philosophical concept of shame and moral consciousness. Commenting on the aforementioned *ḥadīth*, Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī mentioned two interpretations, first of which is that the command is not to be taken literally as permission to do whatever one wants, but rather in the sense of censure of people who have no shame and modesty and prohibition of behaving in the resultant manner. Some said that the implication of the imperative *"Do"* is a threat: "If you have no shame then do what you want, for Allah will pay you back for it." The second interpretation, is that the statement is

> A command with the meaning of 'informing' i.e. [informing us] that someone who is not ashamed will do whatever they want, because the thing that prevents the perpetration of ugly acts [such as

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[160] Merriam Webster dictionary

[161] Oxford Dictionary.

[162] Oxford Dictionary.

[163] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, 1316

[164] Merriam-Webster dictionary

> fornication] is the sense of shame or modesty. Someone who does not have a sense of modesty will abandon himself to every indecent and repugnant behaviour and the likes of things those who have modesty refrain from.[165]

INTERLINKING OF MODESTY AND EROTICISM

> "Modesty (*ḥayā'*) and faith (*imān*) go together. If one is removed, so is the other."[166]

Eroticism and modesty too are invariably interlinked in Islam. In public, modesty is prescribed but in the private sphere, eroticism is encouraged. The two are intertwined, since a lack of modesty in public can damage the manifestation of eroticism in the private realm. Ad-Daylamī narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

> Allah loves the woman who is flattering (*mulqah*) and flirtatious (*bazghah*) with her husband but chaste with other men.[167]

Men are also instructed to behave with decorum in public by following the example of the Prophet ﷺ, who is described as being shyer than a virgin in her boudoir.[168]

> Every *dīn* (religion, way of life) has a distinctive quality and the distinctive quality of Islam is modesty (*ḥayā'*) .[169]

During the time of the Prophet ﷺ men and women enquired about sexual matters pertaining to their religion (life-transaction), which the Prophet ﷺ answered despite his innate modesty, for example,

> Umm Kulthūm narrated from ʿA'ishah ؓ that someone asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whether a man who was having sexual intercourse with his wife and then withdrew [his penis before ejaculation] is obligated to perform *ghusl*? ʿA'ishah was sitting there with them, and [the Prophet ﷺ] said, "We do just that, she and I, and then we perform *purificatory* bath (*ghusl*)."[170]

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[165] Ibn Rajab, (translated by Abdassamad Clarke), 2007, pp. 339-340

[166] Ḥākim

[167] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 145

[168] Muslim

[169] Ibn Mājah

[170] See Abū Ja ʿfar Muḥammad ibn Ya ʿqūb ibn Isḥāq's *Al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfi*

Ibn Sirīn reported that the Companion ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar would at times break his fast with sexual intercourse.[171] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said that this means that he would engage in sexual intercourse even before eating and possibly even before praying the Maghrib prayer.[172] The early Muslims were very committed in their life-transaction, but enjoyed the pleasures of the flesh provided that they were within the boundaries set by the Sacred Law. By the ninth century, some Muslim jurists and ascetics had become increasingly prudish. Afro-Arab scholar al-Jāḥiẓ grew increasingly frustrated with this and in his own satirical way sort to address this issue by writing humorous treatises with moral undertones. Al-Jāḥiẓ said;

> There are some men – those who make a show of their piety and morality – who profess to be shocked at the moment of such words as *ḥirr* (vagina), *ayr* (penis) and *nayk* (sex), in most cases, however, you will find the dignity, probity and learning of such people to be more pretence than substance. What, I wonder, would they make of this verse by the [Companion of the Prophet] ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās ؓ, in no less a place than the sacred mosque in Makkah, whilst on pilgrimage:
>
> "If the words that a little bird tells me are true,
> This woman who's walking beside me, I'll screw."

When accused of being lewd and obscene (*rafath*), ʿAbdullāh replied, "That is not obscene! Obscenity is a woman!"

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ is reported as having once asked who lived in the tents that crowded the pilgrimage. "Some of the wives of the Arabs of Baṣrah," he was told. He said, "If a man's father has an extremely large penis, the consequences will be all around him!"

ʿAlī could always be relied upon to raise a smile! Then there was Abū Bakr's challenge to [the idolater] Budayl ibn Warqā' for threatening the Prophet ﷺ on the day of [the battle of] Ḥudaybiyyah,

> "Go and suck al-Lāt's clitoris! Do you think we are going to abandon him?!"

The Prophet's uncle Ḥamza ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib told a disbeliever, "There are still too many of your sort around, you son of a clitoris-cutter!"

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[171] Narrated by Aṭ-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr* with a sound chain of transmission.

[172] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 144.

When he lost patience with Umm Sibā's son, even the Prophet ﷺ himself was reported to have complained, "Can no one give me an excuse to get rid of this clitoris-cutter's son?"

If you pursued this line of research, you would discover many similar examples. These turns of phrase are there to be used. If it was generally believed that they were not supposed to be uttered, they would have had no meaning in the first place or would have already been removed from the language for reasons of probity and to protect its purity. Whoever it was that said, "There are words for every occasion" got it absolutely right!

What would the sanctimonious sufis and moralists think if they heard the shameless way al-Quraẓī's wife complained to the Prophet ﷺ [in the Taste of Honey *ḥadīth*]? What would our puritan make of [the great Andalusian jurist] Ibn Ḥazm's claim to have been climbing a ladder with his wife impaled on his erection? Or of the anecdote about Abū az-Zinād being asked by his nephew,

> "Do you grunt when you have intercourse uncle?"
>
> "A man does what he likes in the privacy of his bedroom, my boy."
>
> "Yes, uncle, but do you grunt?"
>
> "My boy, if you saw your uncle at it, you'd think he was a disbeliever!"

These two last [reports] may only be off-colour jokes but one of our pious forefathers is said to have included the following appeal in his prayers, "Lord, make my penis as hard during intercourse as Your law permits."[173]

Al-Jāḥiẓ said in conclusion that it was not his intention to offend the reader with that which he narrated but to make clear that eroticism is not incompatible with modesty, as illustrated by the examples of the Companions and great Muslim scholars, who were highly sensual but were still chaste and modest.

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[173] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, pp. 202-204. Al-Jāḥiz, *ar-Risālah al-thālithah ʿasharah, mafākhirat al-jawārī wa al-ghilmān,* vol. 1, 2000, pp. 74-76.

CHAPTER 2

Sexual Desire (*hawā*)

Allah says in His Noble Book:
The love of desirable things is made alluring for men – women....[174]

THE WORD 'DESIRE' originates from the old French and Latin words *desir* and *desiderare,* and in the Oxford Dictionary it is defined as "a strong feeling of wanting to have something, or wishing for something to happen." In traditional Muslim thought, there are two types of sexual desire: normal and excessive, the latter being sexual desire in the form of infatuation (*ᶜishq*). In classical Arabic the three words commonly used for sexual desire are *hawā* (sexual desire), *hamm* (impulse) and *shahwah* (lust). In the following passage, lexical, semantic and etymological meanings of the Arabic words for sexual desire are given from the most authoritative classical Arabic dictionaries and lexicons: Muḥibb ad-Dīn az-Zabīdī's *Tāj al-ᶜarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, Jamāl ad-Dīn Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ᶜArab* and ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī's *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qur'ān*. The reader must, however, be aware that Arabic words are often homonyms having a wide variety of meanings depending on context. Thus, *hawā*, for example, can also simply mean 'love' in an un-pejorative sense, but in another context it indicates 'whim' and 'caprice' and in yet another 'heretical opinions'.

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[174] Āl ᶜImrān 3: 14.

HAWĀ

Ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī explains:

> Desire means the soul's inclination to lust; it is said that it is called *hawā* because it causes one to fall (*yahwā*) into every calamity in this life, and into the Pit (*hāwiyah*) in the next world.[175]

Ibn Manẓūr explains:

> Ibn Sayyidih said that *hawā* means devotion, and it can be for both good and bad things.[176]

Az-Zabīdī explains:

> *Hawā* means the soul's inclination to lust. Al-Layth said it means the conscience's desire. Azharī said that it means to love something and for this love to overwhelm the heart. An example of it is the Almighty's words, *"But as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and forbade the lower self its appetites"*[177] that is, from pursuing its lusts and all the wrong actions that tempt it. Ibn Sayyidih says that it can be for both good and bad things. Others say that when one speaks of 'desire' generally, it means something bad unless it is qualified, such as by saying 'good desire' or 'right desire'.[178]

HAMM

Ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī explains:

> Impulse is what the soul is concerned with.[179]

SHAHWAH

Ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī explains:

> The root of passion is the soul's attraction to what it desires. In the life of this world, it is of two kinds: true and false. The true is that which the body cannot live without, such as appetite for food when one is hungry, and the false is that which the body can live without. The word 'lust' can be used to designate both the object of the lust and the feeling of lust itself.[180]

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[175] Ghazi, 2010, p. 199, al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, pp. 206-207.

[176] Ghazi, 2010, p. 199, Ibn Manẓūr, 2003, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, vol. 15, p. 373.

[177] An-Nāziʿāt 79: 40.

[178] Ghazi, 2010, p. 199, az-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, vol. 10, p. 415.

[179] Ghazi, 2010, p. 201, al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, p. 545

[180] Ghazi, 2010, p. 216, al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, p. 270

Ibn Manẓūr explains:

> To have an appetite for something means to love it and desire it.[181]

Al-Zabīdī explains:

> To lust for something means to love it and desire it. The *Misbāḥ* defines 'lust' as the soul's longing for something.[182]

How can lust be considered a kind of love?
Ghazi answered,

> From what scholars say above about lust (*shahwah*), we can ascertain that lusting is having an object of desire and lust; so lust means to desire one's beloved. Ibn Manẓūr's words "To lust for something means to love it and desire it" imply that the beloved is an object of lust; lovers lust after their beloveds in many ways, including how they lust and desire to sit with them, converse with them, and look upon them.[183]

Creation of Sexual Desire

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrates from Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā in *War*ʿ:

> The first thing Allah created from the human being was his private parts, then He said, "This is my trust to you [i.e. Adam], so do not use it except for its right.[184]

Ibn ʿAbbās said,

> Allah created the head of Adam from the mud of the house of Muqaddis, his face from the mud of the Garden, his teeth from al-Kawthar, his right hand from the Kaaba, his left hand from Persia, his two legs from India, his bones from the mountain, his private parts from Babylon, his back from Iraq, his heart from Firdaws, his tongue from Ta'if and his eyes from the Pool (*ḥawḍ*)."[185]

According to aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī and Ibn Falīta, with respect to strength of sexual desire in men and women there are three categories: strong, moderate and weak.[186]

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[181] Ghazi, 2010, p. 217, Ibn Manẓūr, 2003, vol. 14, p. 445

[182] Ghazi, 2010, p. 217, az-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, vol. 10, p. 205

[183] Ghazi, 2010, p. 447

[184] As-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 63

[185] As-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 61.

[186] As-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 249.

PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF SEXUAL DESIRE

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said,

> Sexual desire has six principal causes: youthful ardour, an abundance of seminal fluid, proximity to the object of desire, facial beauty, good eating and bodily contact.[187]

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MALE AND FEMALE SEX DRIVE

In the process of sexual arousal, women tend to be driven more by emotion and men are driven more by visual and physical stimuli. They are also driven by the accumulation of sperm, which needs to be released in a timely manner, and which, if not released, continues to build into a very strong urge for intercourse merely in order to discharge the semen. Depending on the strength of a man's sexual desire, this animal urge can be like a type of madness that defies logic. In this condition, many men are willing to engage in sexual activity at the mere sight of an attractive woman, except for those with great sexual restraint.

Women, on the other hand, do not have a physical counterpart for this male sexual drive. The female urge for sexual relations is far more subtle and complex than that of a man. A combination of psychological, emotional and physical factors determines the female desire for sexual intercourse. The female need for emotional intimacy is often more important than the physical aspect of sexual intercourse. Women are attracted to a man based on how he treats her and the depth of her emotional relationship with him. The more she feels safe, loved, cared for, wanted, and her beauty appreciated, the more her desire for sexual intercourse will increase.

Is Male Sexual Desire Stronger than Female Sexual Desire?

Let us look at erotologists' internal debate regarding whether male desire for sexual relations is stronger than the female.

THOSE WHO WERE OF THE OPINION THAT MALE SEXUAL DESIRE IS STRONGER

Al-Jāḥiz said,

> The firmament and everything on earth is mankind's temporary estate but of all that he is master of, the closest to his spirit and dearest to his heart is a woman. She was made for man to find his rest with and to share love and affection. This is something that is necessarily so, as it is that man has more rights over woman than the rest of his estate, since she was created from him and is part of

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[187] An-Nafzāwī (translated by Jim Colville), 1999, p. 66.

> him. One part of something corresponds more closely to another part of that same thing than it does to a part of something else. As plants are sustenance for certain animals, so women are as land for men to plough.[188]

> *The love of desirable things is made alluring for men – women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high, horses with fine markings, livestock, and farmland – these may be the joys of this life, but God has the best place to return to.*[189]

Commenting on the aforementioned verse, al-Jāḥiẓ said,

> Allah speaks in this verse about the various bounties He has bestowed upon man. Of these blessings, man yearns for nothing with such passion as he desires for women. For that reason, Allah mentioned women first in what man desires.[190]

Al-Ghazālī said,

> The [male] desire for women, which is the greatest of all desires, is susceptible to excess, defect, and equilibrium. Excess obtains when the intellect is overcome, so that a man's concern is so distracted towards the enjoyment of women and slavegirls that he is unable to tread the path of the Afterlife; or it may overcome a man's *dīn*,[191] so that he is drawn into obscene activities.[192]

> Allah سبحانه وتعالى says, "*Say: 'I seek refuge with the Lord of Daybreak, from the evil of what He has created and from the evil of the darkness when it gathers.'*"[193]

Ibn ʿAbbās said the meaning of passage *"the evil of the darkness when it gathers"* refers to 'the erection of the male member.' A traditionalist has traced back to the Messenger of Allah saying [the verse means], *"The male member when it enters."*[194]

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[188] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, pp. 171-172

[189] Āl ʿImrān 3: 14.

[190] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, pp. 171-172. Ibn Kathīr also said in his commentary on the verse that Allah mentioned women first because the test with them is the most tempting for men.

[191] The Arabic word *dīn* is an encompassing word that refers to the English term 'religion,' 'way of life' or 'life-transaction.'

[192] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 167.

[193] Al-Falaq 113: 1-3.

[194] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 166.

Allah, exalted is He, says, *"Man was created weak."*[195]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrated from Ṭāwūs that the 'weakness' mentioned in the *āyat* is man's 'weakness' for women because man's intellect departs when he desires a woman.[196]

> The Prophet ﷺ said, "I have not seen anyone of those deficient in intelligence and religious commitment more likely to drive away the intellect of a cautious sensible man than one of you (women)."[197]
>
> He ﷺ also said, "Be wary of the world and be wary of women for the first source of temptation (*fitnah*) for Banī Isrā'īl was women."[198]
>
> Al-Ghazālī said regarding the words of the Messenger of Allah "Women are the snares of the devil":[199] "indeed were it not for this desire, women would have no power over men."[200]
>
> The Prophet ﷺ used to say in his prayers, "I seek refuge in You from the evil which may be in my ear, my eye, my heart and my semen."[201]

Fayyāḍ ibn Nājiḥ said, "When a man's penis erects, he can say farewell to two-thirds of his reason."[202]

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[195] An-Nisā'4:28. It is well to note that *insān* 'Man' does not denote the masculine gender exclusively, but may refer to male, female, singular or plural, although the word is technically a masculine singular. Ed.

[196] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 165.

[197] It is narrated that Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out to the prayer place on the [Id] al-Aḍḥā or the Fiṭr. He passed by the women and said, 'Women! Give *ṣadaqah* (charity), for I was shown that you form the majority of the people of the Fire.' They asked, 'Why is that, Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone of those deficient in intelligence and religious commitment more likely to drive away the intellect of a cautious sensible man than one of you.' The women asked, 'What is the deficiency in our *dīn* and intellect, Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'Is not the testimony of a woman equal to half the testimony of a man?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Is it not true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menstrual period?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'This is the deficiency in her *dīn*.'" Al-Bukhārī, 304.

[198] Aḥmad; at-Tirmidhī in *al-Fitan*.

[199] Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, 1. 138; al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 166

[200] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 166

[201] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 166

[202] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 23

In another variation he said, "An erection results in the loss of two-thirds of intelligence."

In their works, ethical thinkers al-Ghazālī and Ibn Ḥazm spoke at length about how people can control and master their sexual desires. Al-Ghazālī's advice was,

> Know that this desire wields more power than any other over man, and is the most disobedient to reason when it is aroused. Its consequences are unsightly and embarrassing, and one should be afraid to enact them. Most people refrain from acting upon their sexual desire either through incapacity, fear, embarrassment, or a wish to safeguard their reputation. None of these things, however, brings any reward [from Allah], for they constitute no more than a preference for one desire of the soul over another. Certainly, a man's inability to follow up his desire is a sign that he is protected, and all such obstacles are beneficial in that they ward off sin: a man who does not commit fornication will not incur the sin which attaches to it, whatever the reason that induced him to abstain may have been. But merit and great reward follow only when one refrains from such an act for fear of Allah [Exalted is He!], while able to perform it and in the absence of obstacles and the presence of suitable circumstances, and this is especially so when one's desire is genuine. This constitutes the degree of the Truthful Saints.[203] The Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Arising, seven people will be shaded by Allah under His Throne, when there is no shade but His." And he enumerated among them: "A man invited by a woman of beauty and good family to lie with her, but who said, 'I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds'."[204]

Ibn Ḥazm said,

> Many men obey their carnal souls, and disobey their reasons; they follow after their random desires, rejecting the ordinances of religion, and scouting Allah's commandments. For Allah has put it into all healthy minds to be decent and self-controlled, to abstain from sin and fight against temptation; but they oppose the Lord their Allah, and take the devil's part, assisting him in his evil work by indulging in all deadly lusts; so they commit grievous sins in their amours.

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203 Al-Ghazālī, 1995, pp. 183- 184, al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 183

204 Al-Bukhārī, *Adhān*, 36; Muslim, *Zakāt*, 91; al-Ghazālī, 1995, pp. 183- 184, al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 184

> We know that Allah has implanted in every man two opposed natures. The first of these counsels only good; and incites to what is fair and seemly, so that nothing that is not pleasing to Allah is conceived therein: this – is reason, which is guided and led by justice. The second is opposite to the first, in that it advises solely the gratification of the lusts, and leads the way to all, that is evil and vicious: this is the soul; whose guide and mentor is carnal passion. Allah says, *"For man's very soul incites him to evil."*[205]

Leading neuropsychologist, Dr. Anne Moir and co-author David Jessel state in their bestselling book *Brain Sex: The Real Difference Between Men and Women*:

> The sexes are different because their brains are different. The brain, the chief administrative and emotional organ of life, is differently constructed in men and in women; it processes information in a different way, which results in different perceptions, priorities and behaviour."[206]

According to Moir and Jessel, biological differences between the genders in regards to sexual desire are a natural phenomenon. They conclude that it is necessary that we "accept who we are before arguing about what we should be." Leading psychologists Roy Baumeister, Kathleen Catanese and Kathleen Vohs, conducted a pioneering investigation into differences in the sexual drive between the sexes. After months of research, reviewing scientific journals that reported scientific studies of sexual behaviour, they came to the conclusion that the male sex drive is substantially stronger than the female's"

> The sex drive refers to the strength of sexual motivation. Across many different studies and measures, men have been shown to have more frequent and more intense sexual desires than women, as reflected in spontaneous thought about sex, frequency and variety of sexual fantasies, desired frequency of intercourse, desired number of partners, masturbation, liking for various sexual practices, willingness to forego sex, initiating versus refusing sex, making sacrifices for sex, and other measures. No contrary findings (indicating stronger sexual motivation among women) were found. Hence we conclude that the male sex drive is stronger than the female sex drive. The gender difference in sex drive should not be generalized

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[205] Yūsuf 12: 53, Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, pp. 230-231

[206] Moir and Jessel, 1991, p. 5

to other constructs such as sexual or orgasmic capacity, enjoyment of sex, or extrinsically motivated sex.[207]

THOSE WHO WERE OF THE OPINION THAT FEMALE SEXUAL DESIRE IS STRONGER

Throughout history female sexuality has provoked controversy and led to its repression in a number of ways.[208] Amongst Muslims, debates amongst religious scholars regarding the perceived threat (*fitnah*) of female sexual desire were intense. Muslim scholars regularly discussed the story of Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) and Potiphar's[209] wife in their enquiries concerning female sexual desire. Some of them saw the attempt by Potiphar's wife to seduce Yūsuf as evidence of the inherent hypersexuality of women and their uncontrollable sexual desire. Known as Zulaykhā in classic Islamic literature, Potiphar's wife is the *femme-fatale* of the Islamic tradition, in much the same way as Jezebel is viewed in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

The story mentioned in the Qur'ān states that al- ʿAzīz (Potiphar), a high official in Egypt, bought Yūsuf as a slave and brought him into his dwelling. Yūsuf was a very handsome man, about whom the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, "he was indeed given half of beauty."[210] When Prophet Yūsuf reached the age of full maturity, the Qur'ān relates that Potiphar's wife:

> *...solicited him. She barred the doors and said, 'Come over here!' He said, 'Allah is my refuge! He is my lord and has been good to me with where I live. Those who do wrong will surely not succeed.' She wanted him and he would have wanted her, had he not seen the Clear Proof of his Lord. That happened so We might avert from him all evil and lust. He was Our chosen slave.*[211]

Eleventh century scholar ath-Thaʿlabī recounted in the *Lives of the Prophets:*

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[207] Baumeister, 2001, pp. 242-273

[208] The widows of deceased Pharaohs were buried alive to make sure that they would not be able to have relations with another man. Also, it has been stated that in ancient Rome, female slaves had rings put through their labia majora to discourage them from getting pregnant. In twelfth century Europe, chastity belts were widely used. In the past century, clitoridectomy was performed as a surgical remedy against masturbation in both Europe and the United States.

[209] Given the title "al-ʿAzīz" in the Qur'ān.

[210] Muslim

[211] Yūsuf 12: 23-24

The scholars had different opinions regarding the desire (*hamm*) mentioned in the Qur'ān that Joseph and Zulaykhā had for one another. As-Suddī and Ibn Isḥāq say that when Potiphar's wife wished to seduce Joseph she began to tell him about his charms, and filled him with longing for her. They reported that she said,

"Joseph, your hair is so beautiful!"

And he replied, "It will be the first thing to fall off my body."

"Joseph, your eyes are so beautiful!"

"They will be the first part of my body to flow into the earth."

"Your face is so beautiful!"

"The earth will consume it."

She went on in this manner, now ordering him, now extolling him, and inviting him to pleasure, until finally he was a young man on the threshold of youthful lust, for she was beautiful, so he yielded to her because he saw how much she was in love with him. Now he no longer shielded away from her, and when they were alone in some house he desired her.

Ibn ʿAbbās informed his students of the conversation which was reported to have taken place between Joseph and Zulaykhā. Ibn ʿAbbās narrated that Zulaykhā said to Joseph,

"O your beautiful hair, Joseph!"

[Joseph replied] "It will be the first thing to decay when I die."

"Your beautiful face, Joseph!"

"My Lord formed me in the womb."

"Joseph, you have emaciated my body with the shape of your face!"

"The devil will help you with that."

"O Joseph, the little garden has caught fire, come and extinguish it."

"If I extinguish it, I will have to burn [in the the Fire] for it."

"The little garden is thirsty, Joseph, arise and water it."

"The one who holds the key has more right to water it than I."

"O Joseph, a carpet of silken hair has been spread out for you, arise, and gratify my wish."

"Then I will have lost my share of the Garden."

"Come with me under the cover, Joseph, and I will hide you."

"Nothing can conceal me from my Lord if I disobey Him."

"Joseph! Put your hand on my breast and you will cure me."

"My master has more right to that than I."

"Ah well, your master! I shall give him a cup with mercury in it to drink so his flesh will fall off and his bones will disintegrate. Then I shall throw him onto a gold-embroidered silk cloth and drop him in the small storage room and no one will know of it and I shall put you in charge of all his possessions, the small ones and the large." Joseph replied, "But payment will come on the Day of Repayment."

Zulaykhā then said, "Joseph! I have much in pearls, suppliers and topaz and I shall give all of that to you so that you may spend it to please your master who is in Heaven." But Joseph refused.

Then, [according to the report by Ibn ʿAbbās,] the devil rushed in between the two of them and placed one hand around Joseph and the other around Zulaykhā and drew them together. Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Now Joseph's desire grew so strong that he undid his waistband, and lay down next to her, in the manner of a man about to commit adultery." Jābir related from al-Ḍaḥḥāk from Ibn ʿAbbās that she desired that Joseph sleep with her, and he desired her, meaning he desired that she become his wife.[212] Qur'ānic exegete, Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī also related similar accounts in his interpretation of the *āyat*.[213]

Word of Zulaykhā's attempt to seduce Yūsuf soon spread in the city. As the Qur'ān narrates,

Some city women said, "The governor's wife solicited her slave. He's fired her heart with love. We see that she's the one to blame." But when she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them and made a sumptuous meal and then she gave a knife to each of them. She said, "Go out to them." When they saw him, they were amazed by him and cut their hands. They said, "Allah preserve us! This is no man. What can this be but a noble angel here!" She said,

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[212] Ath-Tha'labī, 2002, pp. 198-199

[213] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, vol. 6, 2007, pp. 4502-4504

> *"You see! It's him you blamed me for. I tried seducing him but he refused. If he does not do what I order him, he will be put in prison and brought low."*[214]

Wahb said that Potiphar's wife prepared citrons, melons, bananas, pomegranates and roses for the banquet *"and then she gave a knife to each of them."* After calling Joseph to come out from the room where he was sitting, he came out before the women and *"when they saw him, they were amazed by him"* i.e. he filled them with awe and they were speechless *"and cut their hands"* with the knives, thinking that they were cutting the citrons and the other fruits. Qatādah said,

> "They kept cutting their hands until they made them fall off, but they became aware only of the blood, yet experienced no pain (from cutting off their hands), because their minds were preoccupied with Joseph."[215]

Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib related the following anecdote from a revered female Persian sage:

> Bunyan Dakht was asked why a woman showed more inclination towards a man other than her husband. And she answered, "That's because of her great sexual desire. In fact, sexual desire was divided into eleven parts of which human beings were also divided so that a woman was given ten parts and a man was given one part. If a man's lust is so little in comparison with that of a woman and if no sooner does a man see that a woman is easy to have sexual union with then he burns with sexual desire, it follows that a woman, on account of her excessive lust, should be a passionate lover of men."[216]

Al-Ḥasanī was of the opinion that female sexual desire differs between women. In terms of their sexual preferences and desires, he categorised women into eight types.[217] Ibn Falīta was also of the opinion that female sexual desire is stronger than male desire, but many women deny this.

Ibn Kemal Pesha narrated in *Restoring An Old Man's Youthful Sexual Potency*:

> "The King asked Barjān and Ḥabāḥib,
>
> "Who has the stronger sexual desire; women or men?"

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[214] Yūsuf 12: 30-32

[215] Ath-Tha' labī, p. 2002, p. 202

[216] Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, p. 218

[217] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, pp. 130-132

> "A woman with the weakest sexual desire is stronger than a man with the strongest sexual desire."
>
> "What is your evidence in saying that?"
>
> "The evidence is that one woman can satisfy the needs of a group of men."[218]

CONCLUSION

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said,

> As for the one who says that the [sexual] desire of the woman is even more than that of the man, this is not the case. The driving force behind the desire is fervour. So, where is the fervour of the woman in comparison to the fervour of the male? The woman – because of her free time, slowness, and absence of what will keep her busy from the fulfilment of her desire – might be overtaken by her desire, and will not find that which would oppose it. Rather, it finds a heart and soul free from distraction. So, it is able to instil itself within her to the utmost, resulting in one assuming that her desire is multiple times that of the man, and this is not the case. And from that which proves this is that if a man has intercourse with his wife, he can have intercourse with other women in the same time frame, and the Prophet used to go around to all of his wives in a single night, and [Prophet] Solomon went to ninety women in a single night, and it is known that with each woman, he displays desire and fervour that drives him to have intercourse. The woman on the other hand, if the man fulfils his desire with her, she becomes exhausted, and does not seek to fulfil her desire with any additional man within that time frame. So, the wisdom of the Decree, Legislation, Creation, and Command is implemented, and praise is for Allah.[219]

Why Do Men Desire Multiple Women?

In many cultures, men have traditionally had multiple sexual partners, either by way of polygamy or concubinage. Historically, polygamy, or the more accurate term polygyny, has been one of the most common and prevalent forms of marriage worldwide. In modern Western culture, however, polygyny is outlawed and considered socially unacceptable. Clinical psychologist David J. Ley argued that in spite of increasing evidence suggesting that for many men there are genetic, biological and psychological factors that predispose them not to be monogamous, secular societies have rejected the concept of plural marriage.[220] As much as a man may be 'happily married' and in love with one woman or more than one in some cases, the desire for multiple sexual partners appears to remain an issue for many men, which prompted erotologists to debate the reasons for that. The answers varied but can be summarised in the following four:

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[218] Ibn Kemal Pesha, 2010, p. 145

[219] See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn*, 2/64-66

1. The astrological theory
2. Customary practice
3. The physiognomic theory
4. Creationism

THE ASTROLOGICAL THEORY

Astrology's definition is "The study of the movements and relative positions of celestial bodies interpreted as having an influence on human affairs and the natural world."[221] Astrology differs from astronomy, "the branch of science which deals with celestial objects, space, and the physical universe as a whole",[222] and astrometry, a branch of astronomy that involves "the measurement of the positions, motions, and magnitudes of stars."[223] In ancient times, people used to observe the movement of constellations to derive an understanding of human behaviour and events. Moroccan physician as-Samaw ʿal ibn Yaḥyā was of the opinion that men desire multiple sexual partners because of the movements of the constellations. Ibn Yaḥyā said:

> A man likes two women differently which is attributed to the difference between their forms and their manners, which is determined by the difference in the form of the heavenly bodies at the time they were born. Since the differences in form, quantity, colour, proportion etc. are limitless and are counterbalanced by limitless differences in such characteristics as kindness, politeness and sociability, a

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[220] Ley, 2012, 'Why Men Gave Up Polygamy'

[221] Oxford Dictionary

[222] ibid

[223] ibid.

> limitless number of different women emerge out of the differences in forms and manners.[224]

The theory of astrology does not concur with the teachings of Islam which prohibit it, as the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah created these stars for three purposes, to adorn the heavens, to stone the devils and as a sign [for people] to navigate. Whoever seeks anything else in them is mistaken and does not benefit from them, and he is wasting his time and effort in seeking something of which he has no knowledge."

And he ﷺ said, "Anyone who acquires knowledge from the stars, acquires a branch of sorcery and [his sorcery] increases as long as [his knowledge] increases."[225]

CUSTOMARY PRACTICE

According to this opinion, men desire multiple women because it is a customary practice in human society for males to have a number of female sexual partners. Ibn Falīta was of this opinion and he wrote:

> If women deny [that they have a higher sexual desire and level of pleasure than men] and they say, "You [men] have a stronger sexual desire and want sex more than us women! This is evident from you seeking us and despising us when we do not want to have sex." Reply to them and say, "Men do not seek women for sexual intercourse because they have a stronger sexual desire than women. The reason is due to their manliness and its customary practice that males have a stronger body than females amongst all animals. This is also because the woman knows that the man will ask her to have sexual intercourse with her. However, if the man happens to be chaste or unable to get married, the woman will feel intolerant and then she will express her sexual desire openly as Potiphar's wife did to [Prophet] Joseph and said, *"Now the truth is out, I asked of him an evil act and he is surely of the truthful."*[226]

Qāḍī 'Īyād was also of this opinion, as having a number of women is amongst the things which is customarily praised and boasted about because it is a proof of perfection and sound masculinity in a man.[227]

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[224] Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, p. 24

[225] Abū Dāwūd

[226] Ibn Falīta, 1977, pp. 22-23

[227] 'Iyāḍ, al-Qāḍī, (translated by Aisha Abdarrahman Bewley). 2006, p. 46

THE PHYSIOGNOMIC THEORY

The third opinion on the reason why men desire multiple sexual partners is the physiognomic theory. According to aṭ-Ṭūsī and others, people's sexual desires vary, depending on their constitutions and temperaments, which are reflected in their outer appearance. Aṭ-Ṭūsī said:

> Know that those with brown or wheat-coloured skin, with either strong or limp flesh, wide veins and black hair, who are temperate and clean, with bluish-black eyes, thick eyebrows and powerful testicles, are endowed with a hot and dry temperament. Those who fall into this category are eager for sexual intercourse and are not spoilt by it. Those who have a yellow colour, red face, white skin and big belly, have a cold and moist temperament. Those with a moist temperament desire to engage in coitus but are not sufficiently strong to do so. If such a person increases the frequency of intercourse, it weakens him. Those with black colour, a clean skin and body, of lean and slight build, with small eyes and very red gums, have a hot temperament and a strong desire for sexual intercourse. As for those who are white-skinned, they come in two categories; either they have a clear colour and beautiful eyes, or the whiteness of the skin tends towards yellow, with yellow hair. The second group have a high libido. Those who have a white colour and a phlegmatic temperament have flaccid limbs and are not strong enough to have sexual intercourse. If they practise it to excess they will die, and so have to take great care when engaging in coitus.[228]

The physiognomic theory suffers from the weakness that human beings' ethnicity or physical features having a correlative effect on their sexual desire has not been confirmed by sacred texts or modern science, although it is a coherent element of the post-Aristotelian four-element paradigm.

CREATIONISM

The fourth opinion held by many erotologists as to the reason why men desire multiple sexual partners is due to the doctrine of creationism, which is the belief that the universe and living organisms originate from specific acts of Divine creation, rather than through gradual evolution.[229] As mentioned in the Qur'ān: "*The love of desirable things is*

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[228] Aṭ-Ṭūsī, 2014, p. 92

[229] Oxford Dictionary

made alluring to men - women...."[230] The *āyat*'s use of the passive verb of the phrase *"made alluring (zuyyin)"* indicates that the male desire for women is created by Allah. In another *āyat*, Allah said: *"Man was created weak."*[231] Qur'ānic commentators have said that although the *āyat* refers to 'Man' in the generic sense rather than the male sex, one implication of it is that men were created weak in regards to their desires for multiple sexual partners. Nevertheless, not all men have the same level of desire for women, as the following tradition related by Ibn Ḥajar in *Preparing for the Day of Judgement* indicates:

> The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "I was made to love three things from your world – perfume, women and prayer."
>
> The Companions were sitting with him and Abū Bakr said, "You have spoken the truth, Messenger of Allah! I was made to love three things from this world – looking at the face of the Messenger of Allah, spending my wealth for the Messenger of Allah and giving my daughter in marriage to the Messenger of Allah."
>
> ʿUmar said, "You have spoken truthfully, Abū Bakr! I was made to love three things from this world – commanding good, forbidding evil and worn garments."
>
> ʿUthmān said, "You have spoken truthfully ʿUmar! And I was made to love three things from this world – feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and reading the Qur'ān."
>
> ʿAlī said, "You have spoken truthfully ʿUthmān! I was made to love three things from this world – serving the guest, fasting in the summer and fighting with the sword."
>
> As they were discoursing, Jibrīl came and said, "Allah the Exalted sent me when He heard your discussion and has ordered you to ask me what I would have loved if I were to be from the people of this world." The Messenger of Allah asked, "If you were to be from the people of this world what would you have loved?" Jibrīl replied, "Guiding those led astray, keeping the company of contented strangers and helping families afflicted with hardship." He continued, "The Lord of Honour loves three things from His

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[230] Āl ʿImrān 3:14

[231] An-Nisā' 4:28

servants; giving one's utmost, crying when in regret and being patient in times of poverty."[232]

The tradition indicates that men differ in the strength of their desires. The Prophet ﷺ was given great love for women. Regarding the words of the Prophet ﷺ, "Of this world of yours women[233] and perfume have been made beloved to me, but the coolness of my eye has been put in prayer"[234] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal narrated an extra part to the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet ﷺ said, "I can patiently do without food and drink, but not the lack of women." Ibn Falīta said, "If women had no other thing to be proud of save the praise that the Prophet's saying implies, they would be contented enough. For Muḥammad, the Prophet ﷺ, was made to love only the best of things."[235]

In another tradition, the Prophet ﷺ said, "The coolness of my eye has been put in prayer and women and perfume have been made beloved to me. The hungry become satiated, the thirsty have their thirst quenched, but I do not become satiated with the love of prayer and women."[236]

In traditional Muslim societies a man who had the ability to satisfy the desires of multiple women was more revered than a man who had the ability to please only one woman. Many early Muslim men used to take pride in the fact that the Prophet ﷺ had the greatest number of wives.[237] Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The best of this community is the one with the most wives!"[238]

Al-Bukhārī related on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik ﵁ that the Prophet ﷺ used to have sexual relations with all of his wives in a single hour, and at that time he had nine wives. When Anas was asked how the Prophet ﷺ had such capacity, he replied, "We used to say that he had been given the strength of thirty men!"[239]

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[232] Ibn Ḥajar, 2004, pp. 15-16

[233] The *ḥadīth* must be understood as one of his ﷺ concise comprehensive expressions. Thus, although undoubtedly romantic, erotic and sexual love woud be included in the meaning of the *ḥadīth*, its meaning would comprise all love for all types of women including very elderly women past the age of child-bearing. And Allah knows best. Ed.

[234] Aḥmad, an-Nasāʾī, al-Ḥākim

[235] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 131

[236] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 71

[237] In a man, virility is "the quality of having strength, energy and a strong sex drive." Oxford Dictionary. Virility is a traditional male virtue reflecting manliness.

[238] Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb an-nikāḥ. Both a general ruling and, by implication, a specific praise of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

[239] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5215

Al-Awzā ʿī said, "Love of women is not like love of this world."[240]

Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah said, "Women were loved by the Master of the Messengers ﷺ, so how could we abstain from them?"

Sulaymān (Solomon) and Dāwūd (David) were also said to have had strong libidos. Despite being blessed with a strong libido, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was a man of great self-restraint, as his beloved wife ʿĀ'ishah ؓ bore witness to, "None of you could control your sexual desires as the Prophet ﷺ could!"[241]

IS IT TRUE THAT MOST MEN CANNOT CONTROL THEIR SEXUAL DESIRES?

It is difficult to say that most men cannot control their sexual desires, but there is definitely a large number of men who are not able to control their lusts when presented with the opportunity to sleep with a beautiful woman, This is a reality which many women find difficult to comprehend. The truth of the matter is that given the opportunity, many men, not necessarily all or most, will sleep with a woman that they are attracted to if they thought they could get away with it. Even some of the revered men have been unfaithful to their wives due to their inability to resist the charms of a woman whom they desire. This is not to say that men should not be held accountable for their actions, but the reality is that many men are not able to control their sexual desires as the beloved wife of the Prophet ﷺ said. For this reason, men are advised by the Prophet ﷺ to not put themselves in a position where fornication or adultery can occur.

ADVICE TO WOMEN - BEWARE OF WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Women should take heed of the advice of the Prophet ﷺ and the erotologists who spoke frankly about the nature of the male sexual desire. Whether a man appears to be a pious Muslim, or is knowledgeable about the *dīn* (religion) of Islam, he is still a man. A man's appearance or knowledge is not a reflection of his piety. Some of the most outwardly pious men are some of the biggest liars and reckless womanisers who take advantage of the vulnerability of countless women. They prey on them and take advantage of the woman's religious sincerity to have relations with them and soon discard them once they have satisfied their desires.

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[240] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 71. At-Tījānī said al-Awzā ʿī meant by this that this is not from the detested love of this world, or it is something that may be from this world and his love from the Hereafter to help him reach there.

[241] Al-Bukhārī

This is a shameful practice and not in keeping with Islam but is a reality which unfortunately does happen in some Muslim communities.

It must be stressed that this is not the case for most men of religion, but there are most definitely a number of outwardly pious and knowledgeable 'religious' men who behave in this manner. They use the religion as an excuse to sleep with women that they are not committed to, whether by way of marriage and/or fornication. Therefore, it is incumbent upon every woman to take heed of this and not let her guard down just because a man appears to be religious. She should seek out his character, and trust her instinct. A woman's instinct and heart will help her more than the words of many people who may be advising her. It is very unfortunate how many Muslim men have used polygyny as an excuse to marry multiple women, solely for their own sexual desires and soon thereafter they divorce these women, leaving them in a wretched condition. This disgraceful practice has not only caused great emotional and psychological damage to these women but it has also resulted in many women leaving the religion of Islam.

IS POLYGYNY THE NORM FOR MEN?

Whether men are desirous of multiple sexual partners due to 'nature or nurture' – i.e. is it a case of constitution and temperament or customary practice? – is open to debate. However not all men are desirous of more than one sexual partner; there are some who are content with one, though this does not appear to be the dominant situation amongst men when looking at human history and the sacred texts. Irrespective of society's laws prohibiting pre-marital and extra-marital sex and polygyny, there are still a number of men who, despite being in a loving and committed relationship, seek sexual gratification from other women. There is increasing evidence from clinical psychologists suggesting that monogamy is not the natural state of men, resulting in a dilemma that contributes to high rates of men resorting to pornography, infidelity and marital difficulties.[242] Ibn Falīta was of the opinion that the male desire for multiple sexual partners is the primary reason that the Sacred Law permits polygyny, "[Allah] legalised the marriage of [up to] four women out of kindness and for fear that men should be driven by [their] sexual desire to commit that which is forbidden."[243]

It was the social norm in pre-modern and traditional societies for men to have a number of sexual partners by way of marriage and/or concubinage. The notion of a man being restricted to one sexual partner is a recent phenomenon with the abolition of polygyny and concubinage. In early Islam even the most God-fearing of men had multiple sexual partners. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ reported that the male Companions had a great deal of sex with their wives and concubines. Some men, as al-Jāḥiẓ points out, actually preferred concubines over their wives because they were known to be sexually more adventurous.

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[242] Ley, 2012, 'Why Men Gave Up Polygamy'

[243] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p.7

It is not only in the Islamic tradition that men having multiple lawful sexual partners is socially acceptable. In many parts of Africa, polygyny is a cultural norm. Having a number of women is highly praised as a mark of manhood in traditional African society, as Professor Abdul Rahman Doi points out, "In the traditional African society, the number of a man's wives and children was the measure of his success in life.... The possession of many wives and children was regarded as a sign of wealth and nobility."[244]

Many Africans, such as Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah, are unapologetic about the institution of polygyny, "However unconventional and unsatisfactory this way of life may appear to those who are confirmed monogamists, and without in any way trying to defend my own sex, it is a frequently accepted fact that man is naturally polygamous."

Although polygyny may be the norm in some societies, it should be emphasised that the polygynous men who were praised in early Islam and traditional cultures were not philanderers engaging deceitfully in casual sexual relationships with women but those who are responsible and honest in their dealings with their multiple wives and supports their extended families.

WHY DO MEN PRAISE OTHER MEN WHO HAVE MULTIPLE SEXUAL PARTNERS?

Unlike women, who are often rebuked for having multiple sexual partners, men are sometimes praised, predominately by other men, for having multiple sexual partners. This apparent double standard exists in various cultures.[245] The reason why this double standard exists is open to question, but the reason why men admire other men who have multiple sexual partners is not because of the act of sexual intercourse in and of itself. All that is involved in gaining and keeping the trust of a number of women is more significant than the actual act of penetration. Thus, a man who sleeps with unattractive women or who pays women to have sexual intercourse with him does not receive admiration from other men as does a man who is in the good graces of highly desirable women of repute. This is because both the former may prove easy if the man has money, whereas the latter requires courage, effort, patience and some form of distinction by which the man stands out from other suitors. Any man can sleep with a number of prostitutes, but few men can wed numbers of desirable and reputable women. Early erotologists were fully aware of this and praised men who possessed extraordinary capabilities and were able to satisfy the multiple desires of a number of wives. In this, the Prophet ﷺ with his nine wives stands alone and paramount.

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[244] Doi, 1997, p. 154

[245] It must be emphasised that from an Islamic perspective, a man engaging in multiple sexual relations is only praiseworthy if they are carried out within the confines of the Sacred Law.

WHY DO SOME MEN HAVE A LOT OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE?

Ibn Yaḥyā related that a sage was asked, "Why do you indulge yourself in a lot of intercourse?" The sage replied, "You should know that a wise man who indulges himself in much intercourse keeps the humour of his body and that of his soul balanced." The man replied, "May I know what the humour of the soul is?" The wise man said, "I would not say what it is, so please do not ask me about it. Actually, it is known to wise people and unknown to ignorant ones. Know, however, that a wise man indulges himself in intercourse for three reasons, whereas the majority of people indulge in intercourse for only one. These three reasons are:

1. These beautiful forms by which we are enthralled attract the heart as a magnet attracts iron. We wise men are too weak to resist this magnetic force and, as a matter of fact, it is only miserable people who resist it.

2. A wise man knows that life will inevitably end and that his wisdom will be of no avail to him. A man who has reached this degree of thinking sees life to be useless and, as a result, he will either seek an early death by following the ways that lead to it, which he should not do, or he will busy himself to fill his spare time, or he may stop thinking about life, which can best be achieved by indulging in intercourse which calms feverish thinking and tames wild thoughts. This is why intercourse has become a remedy for young men who are afflicted with sadness and anxiety.

> 3. A wise man believes that one of the benefits of indulging in intercourse is that it makes the body lean, weakens the nerves, paves the way for decomposition and makes possible a painless and easy separation of the soul from the body.

However, referring to women, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said that time is best enjoyed in the company of women. About this particular point he said, "The world is a place of enjoyment, and the best of its enjoyment is a righteous woman."[246]

> Also referring to this point, the Qur'ān says, *"Bear in mind that the present life is just a game, a diversion, an attraction, a cause of boasting among you, of rivalry in wealth and children."*[247]
>
> Thus what I have said is in keeping with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. I have thus cited why wise men indulge in intercourse; you can choose to believe it or not."[248]

THE FITNAH (TEMPTATION) OF WOMEN IS THE GREATEST TRIAL

The Prophet ﷺ said in an authentic tradition, "I have not left behind me any *fitnah* (temptation) more harmful to men than women."[249] For men, particularly womanisers,[250] the most difficult trial they are likely to face is to curb their philandering ways for the sake of Allah. It is indeed possible that a Muslim may be a womaniser, just as a Muslim may be a thief, drinker of alcohol or engage in usurious transactions. Although these are all heinous sins in the eyes of Allah, the Muslim should know that the more ardious the trial is the greater the reward would be with Allah if he or she were to abstain from such wrongdoings. Not everyone will have the same test in life. Some Muslims may not have the urge to drink alcohol, steal or fornicate, but their greed and love of money may be the reason why they are involved in *ribā* (usurious transactions) and other wrongdoings. As for a large number of men, the test of women is the greatest challenge they will face in their lives due to the strong desire men have for women and the weakness many men have in controlling their passions.

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[246] Muslim, *Kitāb ar-riḍāʿ*, 1467, an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3232, Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1928, Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4020

[247] Al-Ḥadīd 57: 20

[248] Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, pp. 25-26

[249] Al-Bukharī, Muslim

[250] A womaniser is a man who seduces or attempts to seduce multiple women as a matter of habit. A man who desires multiple women and has (casual) sexual relations with them is also referred to as a womaniser. See Habeeb Akande's *Illuminating the Performance: African and Arab Erotology*

WHICH MEN HAVE THE STRONGEST SEXUAL DESIRE?

The early Arabs were renowned for their sexual potency and were eulogised along with black Africans in early Muslim erotic literature for their seductive abilities and lovemaking.[251] Afro-Arab writer al-Jāḥiẓ was of the opinion that Arab and black African men possess the greatest capacity for sexual intercourse. Al-Jāḥiz praised them for their sexual potency and ability to sire great numbers of children.[252] Other erotologists argued that it was the Prophets who had the strongest sexual capacities followed by the most righteous believers. Speaking about his virility, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said, "I have been preferred over mankind in four things: generosity, courage, abundance of sexual intercourse and fierceness."[253]

In another tradition, the Prophet ﷺ was reported to have said, "I have been given the strength of forty men in assault and in sexual intercourse (*nikāḥ*). And there is no believer who is not given the strength of ten."[254] At-Tirmidhī said the strength of the Prophet's libido ﷺ is due to his Prophethood and the strength of the believers' libido is due to their faith. As for the disbelievers, their libido's strength is average.[255]

> Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib said, "The Prophets, peace and blessings upon them, excel people by their large amount of sexual intercourse. And that is from what it involves of pleasure."
>
> Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Allah gave the sons of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib seven [qualities]: swimming, eloquence, generosity, courage, knowledge, forbearance and the love of women."[256]

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[251] Al-Jāḥiz, 2000, vol. 1, p. 154, "Since sexuality was very profound in the make-up of the Arabs, the devout among them were all the more disposed to do a lot of marrying.". Al-Ghazali, 2007, p. 25

[252] ibid.

[253] See ʿIyāḍ, al-Qāḍī's (translated by Aisha Abdarrahman Bewley). *Muḥammad the Messenger of Allah: ash-Shifā of Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ*. 2006.

[254] Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, al-Awsaṭ

[255] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 71, al-Ḥākim, *at-Tirmidhī wa-manhajuhu al-ḥadīthī fī Nawādir al-uṣūl*

[256] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 71. the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was from the sons of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, who was his grandfather.

> Ibn Ḥajar said, "The more *taqwā* (God-consciousness) an individual has, the greater his sexual desire will be."

The reports above indicate that men are not equal in regards to the strength of their sexual desire, as the following Nigerian proverb implies, "We are born equal but we are not equally talented."

WHAT ABOUT WOMEN WHO DESIRE MULTIPLE SEXUAL PARTNERS?

As for women who desire multiple sexual partners, psychologist Roy Baumeister considers such women exceptions to the rule. According to Baumeister, sociocultural and situational factors can influence a woman's sex drive and behaviour. Baumeister coined the term 'erotic plasticity' to explain this gender difference. He proposed that women have high plasticity, meaning that their sex drive is able to change in response to external pressures. In contrast, men have low plasticity, meaning that their sex drive is relatively inflexible and independent of external circumstances. Thus, according to this theory, the reason some women have a high sex drive and desire multiple sexual partners is due to external factors such as societal attitudes towards female sexuality.[257]

Although men in general appear to have a stronger sex drive than women, this does not negate the fact that women can be just as passionate in the bedroom as a man. The male desire for sex includes a desire for multiple female sexual partners, whereas in general women do not desire multiple sexual partners. In one of their studies, Baumeister and his colleagues tested this hypothesis on a university campus.[258] In the study, student research assistants were asked to approach attractive people of the opposite sex at random and say, "I've been noticing you around campus and I think you're attractive. Would you like to go to bed with me tonight?" More than three-quarters of the men said "Yes", but not a single woman. The study is evidence that, if given the opportunity, most men would not refuse to have sex with a woman whom they desire. In contrast, if given the opportunity, most women are more likely to refuse a man's sexual advances, even if physically attracted to him. The research also showed that men are more likely to take risks and incur costs to satisfy their sexual desire. It was also consistently shown in the research that men desire multiple sexual partners, but that women are generally content with one sexual partner at a time. The conclusions were the same amongst religious men and women who made a heartfelt vow of chastity, the psychologists found. Almost every study and measurement of sexual desire that Baumesiter and his research team conducted came to the same conclusion, indicating that the male sex drive is stronger for multiple partners compared to the female sex drive.[259]

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[257] Baumeister, 2000, pp. 347 – 374

[258] The research does assume that the students on the university campus in question are representative of male and female attitudes in general, both in the country in which the study was undertaken, and across cultures and throughout history. Ed.

Muslim clinical sexologist, Dr. Heba Kotb came to a similar conclusion, stating that unlike men, women are inclined to be content with one sexual partner, especially if they are in love: "It is evident that the nature of women is physiologically and psychologically different from that of men. Psychologically speaking, the woman is monogamous by her very nature."

WHICH WOMEN ARE THE BEST AT SEXUAL INTERCOURSE?

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrated that when al-Ḥārith, a renowned physician of the pre-Islamic Arabs,[260] was asked by [the Persian Emperor] Chosroes I, "Which women are the best [in beauty and sexual intercourse]?" he answered:

> A woman who possesses the form of the women of Madinah [is the best]. She is above average height, has a large forehead, firm nostrils, pale white skin and cheeks of perfect form. Her over-aching eyelashes are ornamented and meet together across a nose of pride like lovers stealing a kiss. She has well-formed, pearly-white teeth flashing with smiles. Her posterior is large and rotund, her shoulders broad and well-thrown back; her whole body poised upon tiny feet which in suppleness and softness of allurement resemble the grace and beauties of the houris of the Garden. And as for the best from the other women: there are the women of the Greeks, who have the cleanest vulvas, broadest buttocks, are well-adapted to a [graceful] sitting posture and enjoy intercourse. As for the women of Andalusia [modern day Spain], they have the most beautiful faces and the sweetest smell. The women of India, Sindh and Sicily [in Italy] are the most reprehensible in their conditions, the ugliest features, the dirtiest vulvas and the most unintelligent. The daughters of Zanzibar [in Tanzania] and Abyssinia [modern day Ethiopia] are by nature the most sweet-smelling and the most obedient of women. As for the women of Baghdad and Babylonia [in Iraq], they are the most voluptuous in the act of making love. As for the women of Syria, they are the most unkind towards men. Bedouin and Per-

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[259] Baumeister,,2000, pp. 347 – 374

[260] He lived up until the time of Islam and died in the caliphate of Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq.

> sian women are the most charming in respect of their secret conditions, and their children are the most intelligent; for eloquence they are unrivalled, and in terms of sociability, they outshine all other women! Their faithfulness is well known.
>
> Kenyan and Nubian women [i.e. from southern Egypt and northern Sudan] have the most feverous vulvas, the largest buttocks, the softest bodies and are the most passionate of women for sexual intercourse. As for Turkish women, they have the most unclean private parts, are the most fertile and have the worst tempers. They are the most rancorous in disposition and the least gifted with brains.
>
> The women of Bosra [in Syria] are the most intense lovers of men. The women of Aleppo are very powerful in body structure and between their legs they are the most solidly-constructed. The women of Egypt are the most seductive in speech, refined in character, and as for the art of licentiousness, they exceed in it, which many stories document. The women in Upper Egypt are the most pleasurable to lie with and to mount. Of all the women in the world, it is reported that the beautiful daughters [i.e. women] of Lower Egypt possess the greatest vulvas and the peasant women that reside in the borders of the Nile are the strongest in desire for a large-sized penis.[261]

This regularly cited passage transmitted by aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī is not representative of all erotologists, as some differed amongst themselves as to which women are the most pleasurable in the act of lovemaking.

The Superiority of Female Sexual Pleasure to Male Sexual Pleasure

Many erotologists were of the opinion that the female experience of sexual pleasure is far superior to the male experience. This opinion stems from apocryphal traditions attributed to the Prophet ﷺ. Studies by leading sexologists also support the classic erotologists' theory regarding the superiority of female sexual pleasure.

EROTOLOGISTS

Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī and al-Bayhaqī, in *Shuʿab al-īmān*, narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Woman has been preferred over man with ninety-nine parts of [sexual] pleasure (*ladhdhah*), but Allah cast modesty (*ḥayā'*) upon them."[262]

Ibn Falīta said:

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[261] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, pp. 132-133; as-Suyūṭī, 1987, pp. 67-72.

[262] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, pp. 157-158.

Sexual intercourse occupies a great and pleasant place in the hearts of women. It flutters in their bosoms, strengthens their bodies, is embedded in their hearts and is the speech of their souls. Even though men differ in sexual desires and pleasure, men have a small portion of this. For the superiority of sexual pleasure belongs to women and not men. Of this particular point, the Prophet is reported to have said, "Women are nine times more desirous than men."[263]

But most women are too shy to seek in men what men seek in them. It is the nature of women to ignore their sexual desire and deny their love for men. The origin of this can be traced back to what was related in reports when Allah the Exalted and Majestic created Eve for Adam, peace upon them both.

When Allah placed sexual desire in Adam, Adam looked at Eve and was extremely pleased and attracted to her. As Adam was about to proceed to her with desire, Jibrīl came between the two of them and said, "You cannot go near her unless you give her a dowry."

Feeling embarrassed, Adam asked, "What is a dowry?"

He replied, "Say, "Glory be to Allah, praise be to Allah, there is no god but Allah, Allah is the greatest, there is no power or strength except by Allah, the Most High the Most Great." These are the righteous deeds."

Adam then said those words, then said, "This is her dowry." Then he was married to her by those words.

When Adam finished making love to Eve, she was amazed [by the extreme pleasure she had experienced] and said, "What was this?"

Adam replied, "It is something called sex (*nayk*)."

Eve asked him, "Give me some more, it is very sweet!"

Allah then ordered Jibrīl to touch her with the whip of modesty (*ḥayā'*) , which he subsequently did and so she became shy. Jibrīl then asked Adam, "Do you love her?"

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[263] A weak tradition in *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr*, vol. 2, p. 76, Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 16. The tradition finds an echo in and may be derived from ancient Greek mythology. When Zeus and Hera went to the hermaphrodite Tiresias in order to determine who experiences more pleasure from sex, men or women, Tiresias responded, "If the sum of love's pleasure adds up to ten – nine parts go to women, only one to men." Kerner, 2010, p. 22

He said, "Yes."

Then Jibrīl asked Eve, "Do you love him?"

She said, "No,"

In fact Eve did love Adam nine times more than he loved her but [due to the whip of modesty] shyness and denying the love [of their beloveds] became an inherent quality of women."[264]

Ath-Tha'ālabī said:

Qur'ānic commentators have said: When Allah let Adam dwell in the Garden, he was walking around lonely; there was no one to keep him company or befriend him. So Allah cast sleep upon him, and he slept. Allah took one of his ribs from his left side, which is called al-Qasiri, and formed Eve from it, without Adam either feeling it or finding any pain therein. For if Adam had felt pain therefrom, no man would be fond of a woman. Then He clothed her in the garments of the Garden, adorned her with all kinds of decorations, and placed her at his head. When Adam awoke from his sleep he saw her sitting at his head. The angels said to Adam, testing his knowledge: "What is this, Adam?'

He answered: "A woman."

"And what is her name?"

"Eve (*Ḥawwā'*)."

"You are right, but why was Eve given that name?"

"Because she was formed from something living (*ḥayy*)."

"Why did Allah create her?"

"So that she would find rest with me and I with her," for that is as Allah said in the Qur'ān: *"It is He Who created you all from one soul, and from it made its mate so that he might find comfort in her"*[265]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrates:

Ibn ʿAdī said in *al-Kāmil* and Ibn ʿAsākir narrates in his *Tārīkh* (*History*) that Ibrāhīm an-Nakha ʿī said, "When Allah created Adam and created his wife for him, He sent an angel to him who instructed

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[264] Ibn Muhammad al-Yemini, 2006, pp. 21-22

[265] al-A ʿrāf 7: 189, ath-Tha'ālabī (translated by Brinner), 2002, p. 48

> Adam about intercourse, which he subsequently performed [with Eve]. After they finished, Eve said to him, "O Adam this is good, let's have more of it!"[266]

SEXOLOGISTS

Research from sexologist Beverly Whipple has shown that women are capable of experiencing a more pleasurable sexual experience than men. According to Whipple, women in general are pleasure-orientated and men are goal-orientated in their sexual encounters. Using the analogy of a staircase, for goal-orientated people a sexual encounter is like descending a staircase that leads step by step to only one endpoint: ejaculation. For women who are pleasure-orientated, the process of sexual arousal is holistic like a circle. In the circle analogy, every aspect of sexual interaction such as touching, kissing or hugging can be a pleasurable endpoint in itself. For pleasure-orientated women, the process of making love, the holding of hands and acts of tenderness can be as emotionally gratifying as an orgasm itself, and sometimes even more so.[267] Other findings from sexologists' research which indicate the superiority of female sexual pleasure are:

1. The average female orgasm lasts longer and is more intense than the male orgasm.
2. The clitoris contains almost twice the number of nerve endings as the head of the penis.
3. Women are multi-orgasmic.

Female Circumcision and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

The issue of female genital mutilation, as distinction from circumcision, is a hangover from pre-Islamic cultures that practised what was sometimes known as 'Pharaonic circumcision' of women, thus betraying its origins. It centres around a perceived problem of female sexual desire that led to discussions about how to reduce women's desire in order to prevent them from committing fornication. According to those of this opinion, all women have an insatiable sexual appetite such that if left to their own devices they would turn into uncontrollable nymphomaniacs and temptresses luring men into illicit relations. Male accountability was ignored and women were blamed as though they are the source of temptation. To curb this problem, several methods were used to control the 'problem of female sexuality.' One of the controversial methods used to 'control' female sexual desire has been through the pre-Islamic practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) for the perceived benefit of men and society at large. Although there are some differences of opinion amongst Muslim jurists regarding the permissibility of the much less severe female circumcision of the Sunnah, jurists state that female circumcision is not synonymous with female genital mutilation. Whilst the former is considered by some to be permissible according to the *sharīʿah*, the latter is unquestionably forbidden.

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[266] Ibn ʿAsākir said in his *Tārīkh* with a weak chain of transmission from Anas. Al-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 63

[267] See Alice Ladas, Beverly Whipple and John Perry's 2005, *The G-Spot: And Other Discoveries about Human Sexuality*

FEMALE CIRCUMCISION AND ISLAM

As we saw, classical Muslim jurists differed regarding the legal status of female circumcision. According to Mālikīs and Ḥanbalīs, female circumcision is permitted but not compulsory because of the words of the Prophet ﷺ, "Five matters are from primordial human nature (*fiṭrah*): circumcision, shaving pubic hair, trimming the moustache, removing armpit hair and clipping the nails."[268] And in another tradition, "Circumcision is sunnah for men and honourable (*mukramah*) for women."[269]

In contrast, the Shāfiʿī school of jurisprudence consider female circumcision obligatory.[270] An-Nawawi said, "Circumcision is obligatory according to ash-Shāfiʿī and many scholars, recommended by the Sunnah according to [Imam] Mālik and the majority of them. According to ash-Shāfiʿī circumcision is obligatory for males. The whole prepuce or skin that covers the glans or head of the penis should be cut off, so that the latter is wholly denuded. As regards females, it is obligatory to cut off a minute part of the skin in the highest region of the genitals. The sound view in our school [Shāfiʿī], which is shared by the large majority of our companions, is that circumcision is allowed at a young age but not obligatory."

Al-Miṣrī says, "Circumcision is obligatory (Sh. ʿUmar Barakat: for both men and women). For men it consists of removing the prepuce from the penis, and for women, removing the prepuce of the clitoris

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[268] Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, at-Tirmidhī, Mālik.

[269] See aṭ-Ṭabarānī's *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*; Aḥmad.

[270] See al-Qayrawānī's *Risāla* p. 161, 305; and *al-Mughnī* 1:85. Ibn al-ʿArabī al-Mālikī says in *ʿĀriḍat al-aḥwadhī* (1:167): "Khafḍ for the woman is like khitān (circumcision) for the man and consists in removing a piece of skin the size of a rooster's crest in the uppermost region of the genitals."

(Keller: not the clitoris itself, as some mistakenly assert)."[271]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said to Umm ʿAṭiyah, a known practitioner of female circumcision in Madinah, "Umm ʿAṭiyah, when you circumcise, restrict yourself to cutting a minute part and do not excise the glans. That will be far more better for the face and more satisfying for the husband."[272]

In another tradition the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "When you circumcise do not destroy. For that is pleasant for the woman and more beloved to the husband."[273]

The process of female circumcision that some Muslim jurists view as permissible is similar to contemporary cosmetic and medical procedures such as labiaplasty (or labioplasty) and clitoral hoodectomy (or clitoridotomy). Labiaplasty is a surgical procedure that reduces and reshapes the *labia minora* and associated prepuce. The most common reasons for women choosing labiaplasty are cosmetic and aesthetic, although a number elect to have the procedure for medical reasons, such as because of discomfort, pain, sexual inhibition and the like. Clitoral hoodectomy is a surgical procedure to remove the prepuce or hood of the clitoris in order to enhance a woman's sexual experience and orgasm. It is not too dissimilar to male circumcision, which is the removal of the penile foreskin. When the clitoral prepuce is abnormally large or thick or it covers the clitoris heavily and tightly, women may suffer from a condition called clitoral phimosis that greatly reduces the sensitivity of the clitoris to almost zero. In particularly warm climates, such a condition can lead to unintended sexual arousal simply by friction between the clitoris and the tightly covering prepuce. Female circumcision is comprised under Female Genital Cosmetic Surgeries (FGCS) and some physicians consider it a form of sexual enhancement therapy. Removing the clitoral foreskin exposes the clitoris more to the penis during penetrative intercourse, thus enabling direct stimulation from the penis. Direct stimulation of the clitoris increases the chances of achieving orgasm, thus causing a more pleasurable experience for both the woman and her spouse. The practice of female circumcision that the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have permitted is not dissimilar to the aforementioned FGCS and should not be confused with female genital mutilation.

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[271] Ibn an-Naqīb, Aḥmad ibn Lu'lu' (translated by Nu Ha Mim Keller). 2008, p. 59 Al-Nawawi states, regarding female circumcision and the appropriate age at which it is done, "The sound view in our school (Shāfiʿī), which is shared by the large majority of our companions, is that circumcision is allowed at a youthful age but not obligatory." An-Nawawī's *Al-Minhaj bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Imam ash-Shawkānī states, "Nothing has been transmitted with regard to its timing nor its obligatory nature." *Nayl al-Awṭār Sharḥ Muntaqā al-Akhbār min Sayyid al-Akhyār*. Female circumcision is the removal of the extra uppermost skin at the top of the clitoral glans and not the clitoris itself as some have mistakenly claimed. The definition of the Arabic term for female circumcision – *khafḍ* – in classical lexicons is as follows: "Removal of the uppermost skin at the top of her glans." See lexicons such as *Lisān al-ʿArab*, as well as Edward Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*. A modern collection of classical fiqh definitions titled *Muʿjam Lughāt al-Fuqahā* is also a good reference. See Afroz Ali's article, 'Mutilating Facts: Setting the Record Straight About Female Circumcision & Genital Mutilation.'

[272] Majmaʿaz-Zawā'id, al-Haythamī (Dar ul-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, Beirut, 1999); also in al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ, aṭ-Ṭabarānī (Dar al-Kitab al-Arabī, date of publication unknown); and numerous others with verified chains of narration. This *ḥadīth* is reported to be weak and unreliable by some specialists.

[273] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 121 Related by al-Bayhaqī

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) AND MUSLIMS

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines Female Genital Mutilation as "all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons." The World Health Organisation classifies Female Genital Mutilation as four kinds:

i) Clitoridectomy: refers to partial or total excision of the clitoris itself; this procedure may or may not involve removal of part or all of the *labia minora*.
ii) Excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the *labia minora*, with or without excision of the *labia majora*.
iii) Infibulation: also known as "pharaonic" circumcision, infibulation is the most severe form of genital mutilation, where not only are the clitoris and labia minora removed but also portions of the labia majora. The vaginal orifice is sewn closed, with only a small aperture left for the release of urine and menstrual blood.
iv) Other: all other procedures for non-medical purposes that are harmful to female genitalia, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising.

Reasons for the practice of FGM:

i) FGM is associated with cultural ideals of femininity and modesty, which include the notion that female genitalia are 'unclean' and need to be cut.
ii) It is often tied to marriageability because it is commonly believed in some cultures that women who have undergone circumcision or FGM are more desirous for men to marry.

iii) To reduce a woman's libido to protect her chastity.
iv) For the sexual pleasure of her husband, particularly in the case of infibulation about which it is thought that narrowing the vaginal orifice enhances the man's sexual pleasure.

The medical consequences of FGM are horrific. They range from chronic infections to problems in childbirth, intercourse and menstruation. The WHO state that female genital mutilation increases the chance of the mother's death in childbirth and the risk of a child being born dead. Also, some young females who have undergone such an operation have died because of severe haemorrhaging resulting from shock due to excessive loss of blood.[274] FGM can also leave women permanently disfigured, traumatised, deprived of a clitoris and any chance of sexual enjoyment.[275] Despite the fact that Islam condemns the mutilation of female genitalia and the damaging effects of FGM, some Muslim communities where FGM is practised have not condemned it as much as one would have hoped.

Infatuation (*ʿishq*)

Although sometimes used for intense spiritual love of Allah, *ʿishq* (infatuation) is a term also used for excessive sexual desire and featured prominently in early Islamic literature.

Al-Jāḥiz said,

> Let me now describe infatuation, so that you may grasp its measure. It is a sickness of the spirit that passes to the body by osmosis, similar to the way in which violence and melancholy eventually wear down the spirit. The pervasive nature of this particular sickness is a consequence of the central position of the heart in relation to the other organs and it is so difficult to treat because it has multiple causes.
>
> It is a compound of different elements, as fever is a compound of cold and phlegm. Treatment directed at only one element is ineffective and merely aggravates the others. Its resistance to treatment is a function of the strength of the different elements. Infatuation is a compound of love, desire, affinity and intimacy. It begins with sighing, reaches its climax and subsides into total collapse once passion is spent.[276]

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[274] Jawad, 1998, p. 52

[275] Kerner, 2010, p. 27

[276] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p. 194

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said about it,

> This is an illness of the heart, contrary to other diseases in its essence, cause and treatment. When it has taken root and become settled, its medication is hard for the physician, and the search for its treatment wearies the patient. In short, infatuation is classed among the illnesses, and can be treated. Its treatments are of various kinds. If it be such that it is within the laws and within the capacity of the lover to be joined with his beloved, then that is his treatment.[277]

Al-Ghazālī said,

> In the case of some misguided people this [sexual] desire may end in infatuation, which constituted utter ignorance of the intended purpose of sexual congress, and a descent to a level lower than that of the animals. For such people are not content merely to gratify their lust, which is the unsightliest of all desires and the one of which a man should most be embarrassed, but instead believe that their lust can only be satisfied by one person. An animal finds it enough to satisfy its lust anywhere it can, whereas these people will only be satisfied with one person in particular, which thing heaps abasement upon abasement, and enslavement upon enslavement, until their intellects are subordinated to the service of their cravings, even though the intellect has been created to be obeyed, not to obey desires and devise means of gratifying them.
>
> Infatuation is nothing but a wellspring of excessive sexual desire, and is the disease of an empty unconcerned heart. One should be on one's guard against its preliminaries by abstaining from repeated glances and thoughts. Otherwise, it will take firm hold of one and be difficult to shake off. In this it resembles the passion which certain people harbour for wealth, status, land and children, or even for playing with birds, lutes, backgammon, or chess, all of which may possess them to such a degree that their religious and worldly lives are adulterated and they are unable ever to abstain from them. To break the power of infatuation in its early stages is like pulling at the reins of a riding-beast when it heads for a gate it would like to enter: to rein it back is a very easy thing, whereas to treat such a passion after it has taken hold of one is like letting the beast go in, and then catching it by its tail and pulling it from behind: a much more difficult task. One should therefore take precautions at the

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[277] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, 1998, pp. 190-198

onset of those things, for later they can only be treated with an effort so intense as almost to lead to death. Excess in the matter of sexual desire then causes the intellect to be overcome to this degree, which is very much to be condemned. Insufficient sexual desire, however, leads to an indifference to womenzd.

Sexual desire is a praiseworthy thing when it stands in a state of equilibrium, obedient to the intellect and the Law in all its movements. Whenever it becomes excessive, it should be broken with hunger and marriage.[278] The Prophet ﷺ said, "O group of young men, anyone [of you] who has the ability to have coition (*bā' ah*) should marry, for it lowers the gaze and guards the private parts. Anyone who is unable, should fast, for it is a shield for him."[279]

Mastering Sexual Desire

As al-Ghazālī explains, despite the many benefits of sexual desire, it does have its harms;

> Sexual desire also contains evils which may destroy both religion and the world if it is not controlled and subjugated, and restored to a state of equilibrium. It has been said that His word [Exalted is He!], *"Lord do not burden us with more than we have strength to bear"*[280] refers when correctly interpreted, to powerful lust.[281]

Gaining mastery over one's sexual desires is imperative, as a loss of control over them can ultimately lead to one's destruction, to which the Qur'ān alludes: *"Have you seen the one who has chosen his desires as his god? Allah has knowingly caused him to go astray, sealed his ears, heart and veiled his vision. Who besides Allah can guide him? Will they, then, not take heed?"*[282]

The Qur'ān and Sunnah provide practical guidance as to how a person can gain mastery over their sexual desire, which will be presented below.

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[278] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, pp. 168 – 170.

[279] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5065, 5066 and Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1400. At-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1081, an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3207, 3208, 3209, 3210, 3211. In another narration by an-Nasā'ī', it is reported that the Prophet ﷺ said "whoever amongst you is capable (*dhā ṭawl*), should get married" an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3206, Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1918, Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4015.

[280] Al-Baqarah 2: 286.

[281] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 165.

[282] Al-Jāthiyah 45: 23.

GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWĀ*) AND FAITH (*IMĀN*)

The story of the Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) and his refusal of Zulaykhā, despite their desire for one another, illustrates the effectiveness of God-consciousness (*taqwā*) and faith (*imān*) in combating unlawful sexual desire. Allah praised Yūsuf in the Qur'ān for his refusal to commit fornication with his master's wife, Zulaykhā, who was a beautiful woman of wealth and rank. Most men would have succumbed to her advances but it was Yūsuf's loyalty to his master, Potiphar, and strong faith in Allah that enabled him to see the sign from his Lord, thus enabling him to keep away from indecency. Ibn Ḥazm and other scholars cited the Prophet Yūsuf as the exemplar for anyone who is struggling with sexual desire.[283] Ibn Ḥazm said,

> Allah did not send down for us the stories of [Prophet] Joseph the son of Jacob, and [Prophet] David the son of Jesse, all prophets of Allah, except to make us aware of our own shortcomings and the dire need we have of His protection, and to teach us how corrupt and frail is our human constitution. Those two were Prophets and Messengers of Allah, the sons of Prophets and Divine Messengers; they were of a household wherein prophecy and apostleship were hereditary; they were wrapped about in Allah's safe keeping, immersed in the ocean of His love, encompassed by His tender care, fortified by His mighty protection, so that Shaytan had no way of coming unto them, and no road was open for his temptations to draw nigh them. Yet for all that, Joseph and David came to the pass which Allah has described for us in His revealed Qur'ān, by reason of that natural disposition within them, that human character and original constitution which were implanted in their souls, and by no means because of any deliberate will and intent on their part to sin; for the prophets are exempt from all that is at variance with obedience to the Divine Will. What passed in them was a natural admiration for lovely forms, common to every human soul; and who among us would be so bold as to claim the mastery of his soul, or who will engage to control its wayward impulses, except with Allah's strength and power assisting him?[284]

Examples of how God-consciousness and faith can preserve the chastity of men and women are shown in the following traditions:

Al-Ḥākim narrates;

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[283] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 184.

[284] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, pp. 238-239.

Once a young man came to the Prophet ﷺ asking permission to commit fornication. The people then started to rebuke him, saying "shush, shush." The Prophet ﷺ then asked the youth, "Would you like it [i.e. fornication] for your mother?"

The youth replied, "No, may Allah make me a sacrifice for you."

"As is the same for the people," The Prophet ﷺ replied. He then asked, "Would you like it for your daughter?"

The youth replied, "No, may Allah make me a sacrifice for you."

"As is the same for the people," the Prophet ﷺ replied. He then asked, "Would you like it for your sister?"

The youth replied, "No, may Allah make me a sacrifice for you."

"As is the same for the people," the Prophet replied. He then asked, "Would you like it for your aunt?"

The youth replied, "No, may Allah make me a sacrifice for you."

"As is the same for the people." Whereupon the Prophet ﷺ placed his hand upon the man's chest and said, "O Allah! Forgive his sins, purify his heart and make him chaste."

The young man did not look at another woman with lust again after the Prophet's ﷺ supplication.[285]

Ibn Falīta narrated,
Whilst ʿUmar was walking in Madinah one night, he heard a woman saying: "The night is oppressively long and dark! And I have no husband to please me. I swear that but for Allah, the sole Creator, I would have given myself up for adultery. But I fear Allah, feel ashamed and want to preserve the reputation of my husband."

ʿUmar enquired about the woman and he was told that her husband was away fighting in the cause of Allah. ʿUmar entered upon his daughter, Ḥafṣah and asked, "My daughter! How long can a woman stay away from her husband?"

She said, "Five or six months."[286]

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[285] Al-Ḥākim

[286] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrated from Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī that she indicated with her hand three months, but if that was not possible then four months, and that ʿUmar set a limit of four months on active service in one stretch.

> Therefore, he issued a command that combatants in the cause of Allah should not be taken away from their wives more than six months.[287]

Al-Bukhārī narrated,

> Abū Hurayrah said [to the Prophet ﷺ], "Messenger of Allah, I am a young man and I fear fornication for myself. I cannot afford to marry women." The Prophet ﷺ kept silent. Then I repeated the like of that and he remained silent. Then I repeated the like of that yet again and he was silent. Then I said the like of that and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Abū Hurayrah, the Pen is dry, having written what you will encounter, whether you are castrated or not."[288]

The Pen (*al-qalam*) was among the first of Allah's creations as the Prophet ﷺ said in a sound *ḥadīth* reported by at-Tirmidhī;

> The first thing Allah created was the Pen, and He said to it, "Write!" The Pen replied, "What shall I write?" And Allah said, "Write the fore-ordained (*qadr*)." And so it wrote what had been and what will be for eternity.

The phrase the "Pen is dry" in the *ḥadīth* refers to the fact that everything has been Divinely Decreed. Belief in the Divine Decree (*qadr*) is an incumbent pillar of the Islamic faith, but it is also a matter believers should not delve into in great detail as it could lead to "spiritual loss", as acclaimed Sunni theologian aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī said.[289]

REMEMBRANCE OF THE HEREAFTER

The Prophet ﷺ would also remind his Companions of the torments of the Fire to warn people against transgressing the Sacred Law, "The Fire is surrounded by all kinds of desires and passions, while the Garden is surrounded by all kinds of disliked undesirable things."[290] "*For anyone who feared the meeting with his Lord and restrained himself from base desires. the Garden will be [his] home.*"[291]

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[287] Ibn Muhammad al-Yemini, 2006, pp. 21-22.

[288] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4788, an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3215.

[289] See *The Creed of Imam aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī* translated, introduced and annotated by Hamza Yusuf, 2007 and the creed section in *Risala* by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī.

[290] Al-Bukhārī, 6487.

[291] An-Nāzi'āt 79: 40–41.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Muslims, beware of adultery. It has six consequences, three in this world and the others in the next. As for the worldly consequences, it makes off with the light of the face, it results in poverty and shortens life. The consequences in the Hereafter are that it entails the displeasure of Allah, a severe reckoning and abiding in the Fire."[292]

INTERCOURSE WITH ONE'S SPOUSE

Jābir reported,

> The Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw a woman and then he went to his wife Zaynab, as she was tanning leather and had sexual intercourse with her. He then went to his Companions and told them, "Woman advances and retires in the shape of a devil, so when one of you sees a woman, he should come to his wife, for that will repel what he feels in his heart."[293]

In another tradition, the Prophet ﷺ said,

> "When a woman attracts any of you and captivates his heart, then he should go to his wife [and have sex with her], for it will repel that what he feels."[294]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Women and perfume have been made beloved to me from this world of yours, but the coolness of my eye has been put in the prayer."[295]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said,

> When he [the Prophet] spoke of the prayer after the enjoyment of these two pleasures [women and perfume], he indicated that having sexual intercourse dispels the distraction of erotic urges and sexual desires – which destroy clarity of perception and concentration by interfering with the flow of reflection and thought, and by diminishing awareness of the religion (*dīn*). It is for this reason that physicians have described the sex drive as being [a type of] madness. And by Allah, it is the most common of manias, for it is the most irrepressible of all the things that can dominate man. Truly a

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[292] Al-Kharā'iṭī in *Masāwī al-akhlāq*, Abū Nuʿaym in *Ḥilyah al-awliyā'*, and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿab al-īmān*, a weak prophetic tradition.

[293] Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1403 a.

[294] Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1403 c.

[295] Aḥmad, an-Nasā'ī, al-Ḥākim.

man's judgement is wiped out by the intensity of his lust and things like it.[296]

LOWERING THE GAZE

Allah ﷻ said,

"[Prophet], tell believing men to lower their eyes and guard their private parts: that is purer for them. Allah is well aware of everything they do. And tell believing women that they should lower their eyes, guard their private parts and not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal."[297]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Lower your gaze and you will protect your private parts!"[298]

He ﷺ also narrated from his Lord in a *ḥadīth qudsī*,

Allah the Mighty and Majestic said, "The glance is one of the poisonous arrows of the Devil (*Iblīs*). Whoever lowers his gaze out of fear of Me, I will bestow faith upon him the sweetness of which he will experience in his heart."[299]

Al-Ghazālī said,
The fornication of the eye is one of the major venial faults, and soon leads on to a mortal and obscene sin, which is the fornication of the flesh. The man who is unable to turn away his eyes will not be able to safeguard himself against unchastity.[300]

FASTING

The Prophet ﷺ said,

O group of young men, any [of you] who has the ability to have coition (*bā'ah*) should marry, for it lowers the gaze and guards the private parts. Anyone who is unable, should fast, for it is a shield for him.[301]

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[296] As-Suyuti (translated by Ahmad Thomson), 2009, pp. 20-21

[297] An-Nūr 24: 30-31.

[298] Al-Mundhirī, p. 430. It is a very weak *ḥadīth*, related by aṭ-Ṭabarānī.

[299] Al-Mundhirī, p. 429, al-Ḥākim, the *ḥadīth* is very weak as related by aṭ-Ṭabarānī.

[300] Al-Ghazālī, 1995, pp. 172-173.

[301] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5065, 5066 and Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1400. At-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1081, An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3207, 3208, 3209, 3210, 3211. In another narration by an-Nasā'ī, it was reported that the Prophet ﷺ said "whoever amongst you is capable (*dhā ṭawl*), should get married". An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3206, Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1918, Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4015 .

An-Nawawi said that the shield refers to protection against committing fornication.[302]

ALCOHOL AND OTHER INTOXICANTS (*KHAMR*)

An ancient aphrodisiac, alcohol has a number of additional effects on sexual behaviour, which are balanced between its suppression of sexual physiology, thus decreasing sexual activity, and its suppression of psychological inhibitions, thus increasing the desire for sex.[303] Alcohol is euphemistically referred to as 'dutch courage' or 'liquid confidence' because by it people lose their inhibitions, increase in 'sexual confidence' and gain potvaliancy – the courage or bravery resulting from intoxication. Whether due to deep-lying insecurities or fear of rejection, many people rely on alcohol and other intoxicants to boost their self-confidence.[304] This is an unfortunate state of affairs as real confidence lies in sobriety. Alcohol and other intoxicants merely provide a temporary state of false confidence by reducing a person's inhibitions and causing a loss of discernment.[305] Recent studies have shown that for men, alcohol consumption can decrease sexual arousal and the ability to achieve an orgasm. With respect to women, studies have shown that although alcohol may lower inhibitions, which enables women to have more confidence in their body image and have intercourse, it has damaging consequences. Copious consumption of alcohol can act as a central nervous-system depressant and affect sexual performance deleteriously. English playwright William Shakespeare famously said about alcohol and sexual desire, "it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance."[306]

Heavy drinking of alcohol is reported to dull sensation and can make it difficult for a man to maintain an erection and for a woman to achieve orgasm. But alcohol is not the only intoxicant which negatively affects sexual performance.

Khat is a stimulant which speeds up the mind and body. It is used mostly in North East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. It can cause an initial increase in men's libido followed by loss of sexual drive, spermatorrhea and impotence. Cannabis is also said to decrease long term libido, though some users claim that it temporarily increases sexual desire. It suppresses the pituitary gland, which regulates the production of testosterone.

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[302] An-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*,, p. 868

[303] Crowe, 1989, pp. 374-386

[304] Alcohol dependency is an issue amongst some Muslims despite Islam's prohibition of its consumption.

[305] Studies by Femfresh found out that many women drink alcohol before having sexual intercourse because they lack the confidence to have sex whilst sober. The women in the study said alcohol helped them lose their inhibitions and become more adventurous in the bedroom. There are also a number of men who rely on alcohol consumption before sexual intercourse because they are severely lacking in confidence.

[306] William Shakespeare's Macbeth 2.3.28.

In spite of some of the benefits that alcohol and other intoxicants provide, the Sacred Law has wisely prohibited their consumption as their harms outweigh their benefits.[307] When some people asked the Prophet ﷺ about *khamr* (wine) and gambling, Allah revealed to His Prophet, "*They ask you [Prophet] about intoxicants and gambling, say, "There is great sin in both and some benefit for people: [but] the sin is greater than the benefit.*""[308]

Some factors that modern medicine has found to increase or decrease sexual desire are presented below.

OVULATION INCREASES SEXUAL DESIRE

Ovulation is the phase of a female's menstrual cycle when an egg (ovule) is released from the ovaries. Women are most fertile during ovulation and their sexual desire tends to increase dramatically during and sometimes just after the period of ovulation, usually for a further five days.[309]

A study on intercourse and ovulation, published in the journal Human Reproduction, found that women are more likely to feel highly aroused during ovulation and will experience a subconscious urge for penetrative intercourse. The study also found out that women are more likely to experience erotic daydreams in this period as well as an increase in their own sexual attractiveness through subtle behavioural cues.[310] During ovulation, women's heightened sexual desire not only relates to the physical desire for intercourse but also the emotional and psychological desire for intimacy.

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[307] "Every intoxicant is *khamr* and every intoxicant is forbidden. He who drinks wine in this world and dies while addicted to it, without having repented, will not drink it in the Hereafter." Aḥmad and Muslim

[308] Al-Baqarah 2: 219.

[309] The day of ovulation differs from woman to woman, and may also differ from month to month. Ovulation usually occurs between twelve and fourteen days before the start of a woman's next menstrual period, the part of the menstrual cycle when a woman bleeds from her vagina for a few days. In most women this cycle happens ever twenty-eight days or so.

[310] Wilcox et al, 2004, 'pp. 1539-1543

OBESITY DECREASES SEXUAL DESIRE

Studies have shown that obesity can affect sexual desire and performance in both men and women. For men, obesity predisposes the individual to cardiovascular conditions such as atherosclerosis – cholesterol deposits on the walls of blood vessels that impede blood flow to the genitalia. Thus, high cholesterol has an impact on sexual performance due to low blood circulation, which in turn affects sexual desire. Excessive weight, especially belly-fat, can affect sexual performance in many ways: it can interfere with the body's ability to supply blood to the penis and it can rapidly slow down the production of testosterone. Lower levels of testosterone affect the ability to achieve regular erections. Impotence and erectile dysfunction in males can also occur due to obesity, doctors have found. Inevitably the two sexual dysfunctions will lead to a loss of interest in sex over a period of time, thus decreasing sexual desire.

Obesity can also affect female sexual desire and performance negatively. Excess body fat can cause high blood pressure and impair blood circulation. Decreased blood flow to the blood vessels in the vaginal area may affect the sex drive. Studies also suggest that overweight women tend to have imbalances in the levels of oestrogen, prolactin and testosterone. These hormone imbalances are said to dampen libido. A poor body image due to weight gain can increase anxiety about sexual performance and cause low libido. This is because the female sex drive is strongly linked to body confidence. If a woman does not feel beautiful or sexy it can severely affect her sexual performance and pleasure in love-making. In order to overcome the anxiety that a significant gain in weight can bring to a woman whereby she does not feel confident and can cause a negative effect on her 'sexual performance', it is advisable for her husband to be supportive and help his wife to lose excess weight by offering words of encouragement and providing practical solutions so that her sexual confidence and thus her desire will be restored.

MOTHERHOOD CAN DECREASE SEXUAL DESIRE

Motherhood is one of the ultimate expressions of womanhood, which nevertheless can often strip a woman of the feeling of her femininity and cause a loss of desire for sexual relations. A survey compiled by Mother & Baby magazine found that having children can dampen a couple's sex life. The majority of women surveyed admitted that the strain of continually waking in the middle of the night to feed their child had all but eliminated their libido.

Dean Mahoney of the National Family and Parenting Institute, said,

> For women especially, having a baby changes the way they think about themselves. They see themselves more as a parent than as a partner and this can have a huge impact on a relationship.

CHAPTER 3

Beauty (*jamāl*)

"Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty."[311]

BEAUTY IS DEFINED as a combination of all the qualities of a person or thing that delights the senses and pleases the mind. A 'beauty' is also a very attractive or well-formed woman. The latter definition of [physical] beauty is what is intended in this chapter. The word beauty originated from the Old French word *beaute*, based on the Latin word *bellus* (beautiful, fine). The Arabic equivalent of beauty commonly used is *jamāl* and *ḥusn*. Beauty and its derivatives are common in the Arab-Muslim world. Names such as Jamāl and Jamīl for men, Jamīlah (also spelt Jameelah) for women, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn for men, and Ḥusnah for women are very popular amongst Muslims and Arabic-speaking peoples.

Jamāl

Ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī said,

> *Jamāl* means great beauty (*ḥusn*), and there are two aspects to this: the first is the beauty with which a person is characterised in soul, body or actions; the second is that which connects to something else. In this regard, it is related that the Prophet said, "Allah is Beautiful and He loves beauty," which indicates that all goodness flows from Him, so He loves those who are characterised by this goodness. And Allah Almighty says, *"And for you there is in them beauty, when you bring them [home] to rest"*[312] and *"Yet beautiful patience"*.[313]

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[311] Muslim,

[312] An-Naḥl 16:6.

[313] Yusuf 12:18, Al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, p. 97.

Az-Zabīdī said,

> *Jamāl* means beauty (*ḥusn*), whether of appearance or of character.[314]

Ḥusn

Ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī said,

> The word *ḥusn* describes all that is delightful and desirable, and there are three aspects to this: that which the mind finds attractive, that which the impulse finds attractive, and that which the senses find attractive.[315]

Az-Zabīdī said,

> *Ḥusn* means beauty (*jamāl*), and it seems that they are synonyms. Aṣmaʿī said that *ḥusn* refers to the beauty the eyes perceive, and *jamāl* to the beauty the nose perceives. The *Ṣiḥāḥ* says that *ḥusn* is the opposite of ugliness. Azharī said that *ḥusn* describes all that is good and beautiful.[316]

Ghazi said,

> Beauty is an objective reality that exists in things themselves, and therefore it is objectively present in the beloved. It is not true, as the saying goes that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' (although it would be true to say: 'taste is in the eye of the beholder'). Rather beauty is present in things themselves – indeed, it is present in all things, for Allah says: "*Who beautified everything that He created. And He began the creation of man from clay.*"[317]

External and Internal Beauty

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said in his discussion of the nature of beauty,

> Beauty is divided into two parts; external and internal beauty. Internal beauty is beloved in and of itself. It is things like the beauty of knowledge, intellect, generosity, chastity and courage. Internal beauty is what Allah looks at in His servant and it is the place of His love, The Prophet ﷺ said. "Verily Allah does not look at your forms or wealth. Instead He looks at your hearts and actions."[318]

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314 Az-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, vol. 7, p. 263.

315 Al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, p. 118.

316 Az-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs*, vol. 7, p. 263

317 Ghazi, 2010, p. 367.

318 Muslim.

> As for external beauty, it is an adornment that Allah bestows upon some forms over others. External (physical) beauty is from the increase in creation which Allah referred to in the verse, *"He increases in his creation what He wills."*[319]

Scholars have said that the increase refers to a nice voice and beautiful physique.[320] As-Sa ʿdī said in his exegesis that *"increases"* refers to a good physique and beauty amongst other things.[321]

Importance of Physical Beauty

Physical beauty is an important component of sexual love. Feminine physical beauty is particularly important for men as visual stimulation is often a key component of arousal. For this reason, the Qur'ān permits men to seek spouses whom they find aesthetically pleasing, *"Marry whichever [other] women seem good to you."*[322]

Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ advised his Companions to marry women they were attracted to. Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh narrated that the Messenger of Allah said, "If one of you proposes to a woman and if he is able to look at her that which motivates him to marry her, let him do so."[323] "I [the narrator of the tradition] proposed marriage to a young woman, and I used to hide where I could see her, until I saw that which encouraged me to go ahead and marry her, so I did so."[324]

Al-Mughīrah ibn Shu ʿbah narrated, "I proposed marriage to a woman at the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Have you looked at her?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'Look at her, because it is more likely to create harmony and closeness between you.'" According to another report, the narrator added, "so he did that. He married her and mentioned that they got along."[325]

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[319] Fāṭir, 35: 1.

[320] Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007, p. 170.

[321] As-Saʿdī, *Taysīr al-Karīm ar-Raḥmān*, p. 652.

[322] An-Nisā', 4: 3.

[323] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3234, 3246, 3247.

[324] Aḥ-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 2696. According to another narration, Jābir said, "...a young woman of Banī Salamah. I used to hide from her, until I saw that which encouraged me to go ahead and marry her, so I did so." (Abū Dāwūd, no. 1832, 1834) From Abū Hurayrah: "I was with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when there came a man who informed him that he had married a woman of the Ansār. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him, "Have you seen her?" He said, "No." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Go and look at her, for there is something in the eyes of the Anṣār." Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1424.

[325] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3235, at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1087

He ﷺ is narrated to have said, "If Allah places in a man's heart to propose to a woman, then there is no harm in him looking at her."[326]

Sahl ibn Saʿd narrated: A woman came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "Messenger of Allah! I have given myself to you." She stood for a long time, and then a man got up and said, "Messenger of Allah, marry her to me if you have no need of her."[327]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said, "Men! Marry women that are fresh and of surpassing beauty!"[328]

Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab, a pre-Islamic Arab warrior, said, "When getting married, choose a beautiful woman whose face gives you comfort, for a man enjoys looking at a woman and finds pleasure in her presence. A beautiful face is the first gift that you can expect of a woman."[329]

Al-Ḥasanī said, "The beauty of a woman, the composition of her beautiful frame and the delicateness of her attributes are the greatest attractions for a man in wanting to have intercourse with her. Sexual attraction occurs when he looks at her."[330]

Al-Jāḥiz said, "Let me explain the concept of [external] physical beauty: it is a matter of perfection and symmetry. Excluded from perfection is anything that exceeds the proper measure of symmetry found among otherwise well-proportioned individuals: being too thin or too tall, having oversized limbs or a large mouth or eyes. Although it may sometimes be thought to enhance the body, such excess diminishes beauty. Everything has parameters that define its preordained measure and anything which exceeds these, even in respect of the two finest things – wisdom and religion – is disagreeable and unpleasant. Symmetry is a matter of the balance of a thing, not its quantity. With respect to the soul, it refers to the homogeneity of its elements. With respect to the human body, it refers to the balance of physical features such that none is disproportionate to another, as for example, large eyes with a small, snub nose; a big nose with narrow eyes and a receding chin; a large head and wide face with a thin body; a long trunk with short legs; a short trunk with long legs; or a high forehead and small face."[331]

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[326] Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4031

[327] Al-Bukhārī & Muslim. Mālik, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 28.3.8 and an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3200, an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3339, at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1114

[328] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 1987, p. 10

[329] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 11

[330] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, 123

[331] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p. 192

A woman came to one of the great Muslim jurists of the Followers, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and said, "Abū Saʿīd, would you give edicts permitting men to marry more than one woman?"

"Yes" Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said.

"Even over someone like me?"

The woman then unveiled, revealing a face as beautiful as the moon. When the woman left, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, "A man who has such a wife in his house has all the joys of life."[332]

A poet said,

"Do not be deceived by an ugly woman who would cost you less.
Ugly women, however cheap they may be, are still expensive!"[333]

It is also highly encouraged for a wife to beautify herself in order to please both her husband and her Lord.[334] The Prophet ﷺ said, "The best of women is the wife who, when you look at her, she pleases you."[335]

Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ said, "I love to adorn myself for my wife as I wish her to adorn herself for me."[336]

The Prophet ﷺ regularly used to groom his hair, wear clean clothes, clean his mouth and perfume himself. The failure of a man to maintain a clean and handsome appearance can contribute to his wife committing adultery, as the Prophet ﷺ warned, "Wash your clothes, cut your hair, use the toothstick (*siwāk*), adorn yourselves and clean yourselves because the Children of Israel would not do this, so their women committed adultery."[337]

The Prophet ﷺ granted the wife of Thābit ibn Qays a divorce (*khulʿ*) because she was not attracted to her husband and was afraid that she could not fulfil his marital rights. She said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "My face and his face will never look at one another" He asked her, "Why?" She said, "I looked at him coming in the company of his friends and he was the shortest and the ugliest." The Messenger asked her, "Will you return him the dower he gave you?" She replied, "Even if he asks for more, I will give him it." The Prophet ﷺ told Thābit, "Take what you have given her and release her [i.e. by divorce]."[338]

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[332] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 17

[333] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 17

[334] Muftī al-Kawtharī said, "A wife must first and foremost adorn herself for her husband, and is rewarded for doing so. To beautify oneself in order to attract the attention of non-*Maḥram* men (non-family members) is absolutely unlawful and a great sin." al-Kawtharī, 2008, p. 37

[335] Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī narrated it from Abū Hurayrah.

[336] Al-Kawtharī, 2008, p. 45, Related in Ibn al-Jawzī's *Sayd al-Khāṭir*

[337] Al-Kawtharī, 2008, p. 45, Related *in Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa'l-Afʿāl, 17115*

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was in the mosque when a man came in with dishevelled hair and beard. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ motioned with his hand that he should be sent out to groom his hair and beard. The man did so and then returned. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Is this not better than that one of you should come with his head dishevelled as if he were a *shayṭān*?"[339]

On another occasion the Prophet ﷺ saw a man with unkempt hair and remarked, "Does he have nothing with which to comb his hair?"[340]

It has been said most appositely, "What the eye does not admire, the heart does not desire."

A well-known Yoruba proverb has it that, "A woman without beauty lasts long on her mother's porch" – meaning that unattractive women find it difficult to find a spouse.[341]

The Power of Beauty

Ghazi said, "Beauty has tremendous power, just as love does. Dazzling beauty can distract those who see it from everything around them, even from their own selves, even from their own senses, even from pain. Allah says, "*Some city women said, 'The governor's wife solicited her slave. He's fired her heart with love. We see that she's the one to blame.' But when she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them and made a sumptuous meal and then she gave a knife to each of them. She said, 'Go out to them.' When they saw him, they were amazed by him and cut their hands. They said, 'Allah preserve us! This is no man. What can this be but a noble angel here!'*""[342] The women of the city were so attracted to him and captivated by the mere sight of Joseph, that they cut their hands without feeling it. Thus beauty can dazzle those who see it, and interrupt their actions, and distract them from anything else. There is no power, save the power of Allah, which can do this in this way."[343]

Men, being creatures dominated by the visual sense to a great degree, are susceptible to the effects of female beauty. In extreme cases, it can cause an individual to lose his mind. Men, as the Qur'ān informs us, are weak, and the commentators say that this is particularly in their desires for beautiful women. Because of this, the Prophet ﷺ mentioned that amongst the people who will be protected by the shade of Allah on the Day when there is no shade but His shade is a young man who refused the sexual advances of a beautiful woman of high status because he feared Allah. Such a man, who although not impotent does not yield to his desires, is not the same as someone who does not sleep with beautiful women because of his incapacity. As sexual desire, particularly amongst young men, is difficult to control, the reward for a man who can survive such a test is commensurately immense.

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[338] Abū Dāwūd. An-Nasā'ī, Al-Bukhārī

[339] Al-Muwaṭṭa' 51.2.7

[340] Abū Dāwūd. An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb az-zīnah min as-sunan, bāb taskīn ash-shaʿr*, no. 5236

[341] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 383

[342] Yūsuf 12: 30-31

[343] Ghazi, 2010, pp. 367-368

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is narrated to have said, "Great reward goes with great trials."[344]

Al-Jāḥiz spoke about the power beauty exercises over men in his treatise on the merits of women. He wanted to point out the hypocrisy of those 'religious' people who outwardly appear righteous but are inwardly immoral. The issues regarding the psychology of self-righteous people that al-Jāḥiẓ raises exist within all religious communities, not just Muslims.

> "I have noticed some men treating women with the utmost contempt and denying them most of their rights. It is a sign of weakness if a man can only fulfil his obligation to his father and uncles by denying them to his mother and aunts. For this reason, I have written of the merits of women. It is not uncommon to find men who boast of their stoicism, fortitude and powers of resistance to women's charms, yet when a beautiful woman appears before such a man he falls into his shell. There are even some who consider a man's love for his maid, wife and children to be a sign of weakness."[345]

Beware of Beauty

For all its importance, the Prophet ﷺ warned that beauty should not be the sole criterion when choosing a marital partner when he said, "Women are married for four reasons: their wealth, standing, beauty or *dīn* (religion). So marry a woman of *dīn* and you will prosper."[346]

Ibn Falīta narrated that the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said; "Beware of green dung." When asked what green dung is, he ﷺ replied, "A beautiful woman brought up in a bad environment."[347]

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[344] At-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah.

[345] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p. 176

[346] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5090

[347] Ibn Muhammad al-Yemini, 2006, p. 15, al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 56

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said, "Do not marry women for their beauty for their beauty may be their ruin."[348]

Ibn Falīta related some anecdotes, from ancient sages such as Aktham ibn Sayfī, showing that a pleasing physique is no guide to good character. Aktham advised, "Do not be so fascinated by a woman's beauty that you overlook inquiring into her origin, for women from a good origin are paths to honour."[349]

Another sage was asked what he thought of marrying beautiful women. He replied, "You will never find a fertile pasture without traces of grazing cattle."[350]

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ is reported to have said, "Beautiful people are not always good, but good people are always beautiful."

In the Old Testament it is said that "a beautiful woman who lacks discretion is like a gold ring in a pig's snout."[351]

Similarly, in the New Testament it is narrated that Peter said, "Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewellery, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God."[352]

Owomoyela cites a Yoruba proverb thus: "Go with your head, not with your beauty; beauty abandons one in a day, but one's head remains with one in the marital home," meaning that a woman should care more about good character than about beauty.[353]

Another proverb states, "Beauty without virtue is like a rose without scent," meaning inner beauty is just as important as external beauty. Virtue, which is the substance and core of an individual, beautifies the physical form.

Standards of Beauty

When Islam spread out from the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, the Muslims encountered local customs that influenced their standards of beauty. Persian and Indian ideals of beauty were soon celebrated, as is reflected in the literature of the times. The ideal woman amongst the early Muslims was a white, nubile virgin woman with long jet black hair, black irises and breasts shaped like pomegranates. Women possessing such characteristics were highly desired as they resembled the Qur'ānic descriptions of the houris in the Garden.

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[348] Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1932

[349] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 10

[350] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 10

[351] Proverbs 11:22

[352] Peter 3:3-4

[353] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 352

The norms and canons of the beautiful changed from one place and time to another in the Muslim world. The ideal woman for some might be variously corpulent, plump, slim or even obese. Sometimes large breasts were desired, sometimes firm round ones. Pink flesh, chubby and curved (*samīna*, *malḥūma*), a wasp-like waist or bamboo-like figure (*ghusn al-bān*, *quḍīb khaizurā)* were fashionable in turn, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba comments.[354]

Salah ad-Din Munajjid lays down the various stages in the evolution of the perception of beauty over the centuries in the history of Islamic civilisation. In his work, *Jamal al-mar'ah 'ind al-arab* (The canons of female beauty among the Arabs), Munajjid demonstrated how taste moved from fat women to well-proportioned women *(majdūlat)*, to tall, slim women. Bellies with folds of fat, which had been the delight of men in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period, lost the hold that they had exerted over men, only to be rediscovered in the Ottoman Empire. The Ummayads and Abbasids preferred women with taut and smooth stomachs. Huge breasts like goats' udders, which had been so highly desired right up to the first century of the Islamic hijrah, came to be despised.[355]

Over time, men came to prefer well-proportioned breasts, just large enough to be held in the palm of a single hand. Sometimes, as Bouhdiba remarks, "even the eccentricity of a fine flat chest had its hour of glory."[356]

The extremely slim waist and the upright bearing came to dislodge the heavy, "duck-like" walk, only to lose out in turn to a calm, assured step and a more proportioned waist. In pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, women were often compared to cows, gazelles, the moon or the sun. This-reference to nature declined and woman came to be loved for herself alone and the canons of the beautiful became once again more human.[357]

A very marked homosexual element sometimes played a role in beauty perceptions amongst the Arab Muslims. Faced with competition from boys, Arab women sometimes tried to resemble them. For example, a boyish-looking female with short hair and a manly stride was desired amongst many of the Abbasids. The shaving of the vagina in

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[354] Boudhdiba, 2004, p. 141

[355] Boudhdiba, 2004, p. 141

[356] Boudhdiba, 2004, p. 141

[357] Boudhdiba, 2004, p. 141

Arab erotology was understood by Bouhdiba to refer to the homosexual element that played such a crucial role in the development both of pederasty and of lesbianism.[358] With all due respect to Bouhdiba, the preference of the shaving of the vagina may not be due to the male desire for young boys. For some men, a fully-shaven vagina feels more pleasurable and looks more desirable. The shaving of the vagina which regularly featured in erotology works by Arab Muslms may also have been inspired by the Prophet's ﷺ instructions to shave the pubic hair.

Every culture has its own concepts and perceptions of beauty. A single monolithic standard of beauty is unattainable. Standards of beauty are not universal, as human beings' tastes, preferences and desires vary: some men favour dark-skinned women but others desire those who are fair; some men love women of slim build whilst others are besotted by voluptuous women. Similarly, women have their own individual preferences as to what they find attractive in the male.

The Colour of Beauty

In their discussion of standards of feminine beauty amongst pre-Islamic Arabs and early Muslims, erotologists Abū Ja 'far Aḥmad ibn Hishām, Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī, Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah cited the white complexion as the epitome of feminine beauty.[359] Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Munajjid cites in his fine essay, *Jamāl al-mar'ah ʿind al-ʿArab* (The canons of female beauty among the Arabs), a corpus of Arabic literature brimful of poetry eulogising 'pure', 'fair' and 'white' maidens. In contrast, a dark hue was sometimes regarded as an undesirable attribute. Some jurists even gave judgement that a man could annul a marriage if he discovered that his wife was dark-skinned (*sawdah*), although in some of these cases it this was because of the deception involved and not because blackness was considered a human defect. An Arab poet speaking on the beauties of women said, "Know that white women are the enjoyment of mankind as well as its adornment, while black women are its sorrows and afflictions – as was said:

Remember that the white pearl
  Can really boast no peer.
While a bushel of black coal
  Is for a few pence bought.
But Allah's preference
  Are the white of clear skin

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[358] Boudhdiba, 2004, p. 141

[359] Al-Barqūqī, 2004, pp. 220–223 and ʿĀshūr, 2005, pp. 105-117

Whilst amongst the Fire's folk, the black
  Are surely pitchforked there."[360]

In order to dispel the notion that dark skin is ugly and undesirable, a group of medieval Muslim writers and poets arose who combatted colourism among the Arabs by celebrating the beauty of melanin-rich complexioned women.[361] Troubled by endogamy and the disdain shown towards black women in his time, famed ninth-century Afro-Arab writer al-Jāḥiẓ said, "If white men do not look at black women with desire, so black men do not look at white women with desire! [Beauty and] desire is a matter of custom and is, for the most part, convention!"[362]

Ibn Falīta wanted to address anti-black prejudice by relating verses of poetry from renowned poets who praised chocolate-complexioned women for their exquisite beauty,

They disparage her brown complexion which for me is not a defect.
  They do not know that a brown complexion is an advantage.
People praise a woman for her brown lips.
  What if all her complexion was brown?![363]

Drawing heavily upon Ibn Marzubān's book on the virtues of black people, Ibn al-Jawzī designated a whole chapter in his book to celebrate the beauties of black women. As-Ṣuyuṭī authored an anthology of poems dedicated to the beauties of "brown- and black-complexioned women."[364] Muslim writers who spoke favourably about brown- and dark-complexioned women in their erotological treatises performed a great service by lifting the morale and self-esteem of coloured women dwelling among people who did not appreciate their beauty. Erotologists' celebration of women of colour is reminiscent of the American 'Black is Beautiful' movement of the 1960s, which challenged the widespread belief that black Africans' physical features are inherently ugly and undesirable.[365]

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[360] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 1987, p. 24

[361] Black people were celebrated for their sexual prowess and sexuality in early Arab-Muslim erotic literature. Black men, in particular, were eulogised for their muscular physique, long penises and strong sexual appetite, whilst black women were celebrated for their seductive sexuality, curvaceous figures and prominent buttocks. Al-Jāḥiẓ reports: "The poet Farazdaq knew more women than any other man and had experience of every race but he found none to compare with black women. That was the reason he married Umm Makkīya, herself of East African origin, and remained faithful to her to the exclusion of all others." Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p. 44

The stereotype of black males as being hyper-sexualised promiscuous creatures in some classic Arab-Muslim erotology works seems to stem from ancient Greek philosophers' depiction of blacks as well as from legendary tales about hyper-sexualised black males in pre-Islamic Arabic literature. Although what constitutes 'black' is aesthetically complex in terms of classification of complexion among those who are sometimes referred to as 'mixed-race.' For hundreds of years the debate has focused on variations in skin tone, hair texture and facial features. More attention brought to beautiful women of a dark hue may help to change the perception of whiteness being the yardstick for the notion of beauty.

[362] Al-Jāḥiẓ (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p.45

[363] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 51

Nevertheless, sociologist Pierre L. van den Berge argues that male preference for fair-skinned women, whether white or a light shade of brown, seems to have been widespread since time immemorial, "Virtually all cultures express a marked preference for fair female skin, even those with little or no exposure to European imperialism, and even those whose numbers are heavily pigmented."[366]

The historical and cultural association between fair skin and femininity is supported by Peter Frost's extensive investigation of anthropological data which "reveal a consistent worldwide association of fairness with femininity."[367] Anthropologists have reported that the relationship between fair skin and the perception of feminine beauty even exists among dark-skinned Africans, for whom a café-au-lait caramel complexion is highly desired. In a recent study of race within African-American communities, Margaret L. Hunter writes, "In general, both lighter skinned and darker skinned women agreed that as a rule, light-skinned women were considered by men to be more attractive than dark-skinned women."[368]

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[364] See Habeeb Akande's *Illuminating the Darkness: Blacks and North Africans in Islam* for further discussion on race and Islam

[365] Common African physical features include a broad nose, full lips, wide hips, protuding buttocks, tightly curled Afro-textured 'kinky' hair and dark skin.

[366] Frost, 2005, p, vii

[367] Frost, 2005, p. 90

[368] Hunter, 2005, p. 72.

The 'Curse of Ham' story,[369] the 'Dalits' of the Hindu caste system,[370] Qur'ānic descriptions of the white houris and the concept of 'white supremacy' have also contributed to perpetuate the idea in Arab and Muslim communities that fair skin is synonymous with beauty and dark skin with ugliness. Although there appears to be a general preference for fair-skinned women, beauty, as the oft-repeated adage states, is in the eye of the beholder and men who cannot appreciate the value of beautiful dark-skinned women are the ones in loss. The value of a woman doesn't decrease because of a man's inability to see her worth.

Which Women are The Most Beautiful?

Each country and ethnicity has its portion of beautiful women, but there are some nations which appear to have a greater share than others. In the treatises of the much-travelled Muslim erotologists and writers, they make mention of the beauties of women from various parts of the world. In his treatise, al-Ḥasanī enumerated women from different backgrounds whom men favoured: Roman, or white European, women were considered to have the cleanest wombs; Iberian, Spanish and Portuguese, women had the most beautiful faces; Makkan women were the perfection of beauty and love-making with them was the most pleasurable; Greek women had the cleanest vulvas; Egyptian women were the most lustful and most seductive in speech; Syrian women from Aleppo had the most durable bodies and in general Syrian women were the most moderate sexually; Iraqi women were considered the most desirous and Moroccan women as valuable as gold; and Nubian women had the most feverish vulvas.[371] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa noted the beauties of women from Mali and the Tuareg Berbers. Al-Jāḥiẓ praised the beauties of Abyssinian women lavishly – Ethiopians, Somalis, Eritreans and Djiboutians – as did Ibn al-Jawzī and aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī. Sudanese (black African) women were also praised by aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī and al-Jāḥiẓ in their erotological treatises.

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[369] The 'Curse of Ḥām', also known as the 'Curse of Canaan', relates to a fable mentioned in Muslim literature derived from Judaeo-Christian sources in which the Prophet Noah (*Nūḥ*) ﵇ is reported to have cursed his son (Ḥām) and his son's descendants with blackness. Many Muslim scholars have said the story is a fabrication and that it is not authentic. See *Illuminating the Darkness: Blacks and North Africans in Islam* for further discussion of the Curse of Ḥām story

[370] Many Dalits are dark-complexioned Indians also known as 'untouchables.' In Sanskrit, the word 'Dalit' means suppressed, smashed and broken to pieces. The Dalits are at the bottom of the Hindu caste system and are considered outcasts in traditional Indian society. Since the caste system was ubiquitous in India, many Indian Muslims brought it with them into Islam.

[371] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, pp. 132-133; as-Suyūṭī, 1987, pp. 67-72

Recent studies by British psychologist, Dr. Michael Lewis appear to confirm that ethnically diverse people are, on average, perceived to be more attractive than those whose backgrounds are less diverse. It would be interesting to find out what early erotologists would have made of the women from regions of the world they had not encountered, such as South America, for example the exquisite beauty of Brazilian women. Arguably the most ethnically-mixed people in the world, Brazilian women combine the attractive qualities of white European, black African and indigenous brown Americans, which often results in an exotic natural beauty and loveliness unique to them.[372]

Prohibited Forms of Beautification

Beauty is the opposite of ugliness. The eyes experience pleasure in beauty and it is a blessing from Allah. Once the Prophet ﷺ said to his Companions, "No one will enter the Garden who has an atom's weight of pride in his heart." One of his Companions asked, "What if a man likes his clothes and shoes to look good?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride means denying the truth and looking down on people."[373]

In another tradition, the Prophet ﷺ said, "You are on your way to meet your brothers, so fix your saddles and tidy your dress until you appear as distinct among people as a beauty mark [on a beautiful face]. Allah does not like coarseness and rough manners."[374]

Upon seeing another man with dirty clothes, he remarked, "Can he not find something to wash his clothes with?"[375]

A man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ wearing cheap-looking garments. "Do you have property?" the Prophet ﷺ asked him. "Yes," the man replied. "What kind of property?" asked the Prophet. "Allah has given me all sorts of wealth," he said. The Prophet ﷺ said to him,

"Since Allah has given you wealth, let Him see the traces of His favour and bounty on you."[376]

In another tradition the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah loves to see the effects of His blessings on His slave."[377]

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[372] Lewis, 2010, pp. 136-138.

[373] Muslim, 91

[374] Abū Dāwūd, 4086

[375] Abū Dāwūd, 4059

[376] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb az-zīnah min as-sunan, bāb al-jalājil*, no. 5224

[377] At-Tirmidhī

Although beauty is beloved to Allah and the beautification of one's person is encouraged, it has its limits. Some forms of beautification are prohibited by the Sacred Law according to the following traditions of the Prophet ﷺ.

TEETH SEPARATION AND TEETH SHORTENING (*WĀSHĪRAH*)

The Prophet ﷺ prohibited women from creating spaces in between their teeth (*wāshīrah*) for cosmetic purposes.[378] It is considered to be changing the creation of Allah. As for the use of braces to straighten out crooked or unaligned teeth, Muslim scholars have said that it is permissible even if the intention is for beautification.

PLUCKING EYEBROWS (*NAMS*)

The Prophet ﷺ prohibited plucking eyebrows (*nams*), and censured both women who have their eyebrows plucked as well as those who do the plucking.[379]

WIGS AND HAIR EXTENSIONS (*WAṢĪLAH*)

ʿĀ'ishah ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said that women who lengthen their hair artificially are cursed.[380] Muslim scholars have said the reason for the prohibition is because hair extensions and wigs are a type of deception, which is strongly prohibited.[381] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ called it falsehood (*zūr*)[382] and was reported to have said, "Any woman who adds something to the hair that is not from her head, it is a falsehood (*zūr*) that she is adding to it."[383]

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[378] Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb at-tarajjul, bāb fī ṣilat ash-shaʿr,* no, 4169

[379] Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb at-tarajjul, bāb fī ṣilat ash-shaʿr,* no, 4169

[380] Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb at-tarajjul, bāb fī ṣilat ash-shaʿr,* no, 4169

[381] Qaraḍāwī, 2003, pp. 76-78. Dr. Qaraḍāwī states, "As far as using a wig made from animal hair [other than a pig] or synthetic fibres is concerned, the jurists (*fuqahā'*) state that this is permitted, regardless of whether the hair is completely fitted into one's hair or it is a removable wig. The permissibility of using synthetic hair is related from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, Sayyidah Umm Salamah, ʿĀ'ishah and other Companions. Some scholars disliked the joining of even synthetic and animal hair if it was completely attached and fitted to one's own hair in a way that it is difficult to differentiate between the two, as it is a form of deception. However, many scholars permit it even if the wig or synthetic hair was completely fitted into one's own hair.". If the source of the hair is impure then the scholars agree that it is forbidden. There is nothing wrong with *tawamil*, meaning the use of wool or silk to make braids. Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal has also commented on its permissibility.

[382] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb az-zīnah min as-sunan, bāb waṣl ash-shaʿr,* no. 5246

[383] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb az-zīnah min as-sunan, bāb waṣl ash-shaʿr bi'l-khiraq,* no. 5093

Ḥumayd ibn ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf heard Mu ʿāwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān say from the minbar in the year that he performed the ḥajj, holding a lock of hair (i.e. a hairpiece) which he took from one of his guards, "People of Madīnah! Where are your learned men? I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbid things like this, saying, 'The tribe of Israel were destroyed when their women started to use this.'"[384]

Abū Dāwūd, who reported some of these *ḥadīths*, said, "It appears that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said that there is no harm in tying the hair with silk or woollen threads."[385]

TATTOOING (*WĀSHIMAH*)

The Prophet ﷺ said that Allah's curse is on "the person tattooed and the tattooist."[386]

BLACK HAIR DYE

On the day of the Opening of Makkah to Islam, Abū Bakr brought his elderly father, Abū Quḥāfah, until he had seated him in front of the Prophet ﷺ. On seeing Abū Quḥāfah's snow-white hair, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Change this, but avoid black."[387]

Egyptian scholar Dr. Yūsuf Qaraḍāwī said,

> However, if a man is not of such advanced age or feebleness as Abū Quḥāfah then was, there is no harm in his using black dye. In this regard az-Zuhrī said, "We dyed our hair black when the face looked young, but discarded it when the face became wrinkled and the teeth decayed."[388]

SHAVING THE BEARD

The beard is an expression of masculinity and an adornment for a man, and so it is seen by some as a canonical duty for a man to retain his beard. The Prophet ﷺ set the example by taking meticulous care of his beard.[389] He commanded men to "trim the moustache and let the beard grow."[390] Dr. Qaraḍāwī says; "shaving the beard is an affront to the masculine nature, as it is an attempt to resemble women, while the beard is an integral part of masculinity and a distinctive feature of the male sex."[391]

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[384] *Al-Muwaṭṭa'*, 51.1.2

[385] Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb at-tarajjul, bāb fī ṣilat ash-shaʿr*, no, 4171. Mālik had a similar judgement. What is censured is using wigs and hairpieces to deceive others.

[386] Al-Bukhārī. Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb at-tarajjul, bāb fī ṣilat ash-shaʿr*, no, 4168

[387] See Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, in the chapter on "Dyeing"

[388] Qaraḍāwī, 2003, p. 79

[389] Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 34

[390] an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb az-zīnah Kitāb az-zīnah min as-sunan, bāb aḥfā' ash-shārib*, no. 5045, 5046; Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb at-tarajjul, bāb fī akhdh ash-shārib*, no, 4199

SHAVING THE HAIR

Abū Dāwūd reported that the Prophet ﷺ forbade women to shave their heads.[392]

COSMETIC SURGERY

Traditional scholars are of the opinion that cosmetic surgery for the purpose of beautification is prohibited because it changes the creation of Allah – *taghyīr khalq Allāh* – a reference to a Qur'ānic *āyat*, which Shaytan vowed he would seduce human beings into doing: "'*I will lead them astray and fill them with false hopes. I will command them and they will cut off cattle's ears. I will command them and they will change Allah's creation.' Anyone who takes Shaytan as his protector in place of Allah has clearly lost everything.*"[393]

People of knowledge have said that cosmetic surgery to remove a defect or disfigurement is permissible as the following *ḥadīth* indicates: A Companion by the name of Arfajah ibn Aswad had his nose damaged in the battle of *kulāb*. He replaced it first with silver, and then with a nose made of gold, by the order and with the consent of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.[394]

CONTENTMENT WITH THE DIVINE DECREE

It is understandable that someone would want to correct flaws or imperfections they perceive themselves to have in order to enhance their beauty. As a Muslim, however, one must strive to obey Allah and His Messenger ﷺ first and foremost. As some forms of beautification are explicitly prohibited in the Sacred Law, Muslims should strive to beautify themselves by means that the Sacred Law deems permissible. Muslims are advised to embrace their natural God-given beauty and not rely on extreme artificial means of beautification as they are forms of deception. Our Prophet ﷺ said, "He who deceives is not of us."[395] Indeed, Allah is beautiful and has created human beauty with various complexions, forms and shapes. So it is important for women as well as men to feel confident and comfortable in themselves, whatever form or shade it may be, because they know that their own self-form is a gift from Allah and not of their own doing.

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[391] Qaraḍāwī, 2003, p. 80

[392] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb az-zīnah min as-sunan, bāb an-nahyī an ḥalq al-mar'ah rashā*, no. 5049

[393] An-Nisā' 4: 119

[394] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb az-zīnah min as-sunan, bāb man uṣība anfuhu hal yattakhidh anfan min dhahab*, no. 5161

[395] Muslim

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “A part of the happiness of the son of Adam is in his seeking Allah to choose for him (in *istikhārah*); a part of the happiness of the son of Adam lies in his being content with what Allah has decreed for him; a part of the misery of the son of Adam is his abandoning seeking Allah to choose for him (in *istikhārah*); and a part of the misery of the son of Adam is his discontentment with what Allah has decreed for him.”[396]

Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Look at those who are lower than you and do not look at those who are above you, for that is more likely to prevent you underestimating the blessing of Allah on you.”[397]

In one variant there is, “When one of you looks at someone who has been given more bounty in respect of wealth or physical structure, let him then look at someone who has less than him.”[398]

Abū al- ʿAbbās Sahl ibn Sa ʿd as-Sā ʿidī ؓ said: “A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, ‘Messenger of Allah, show me an action which if I do it, Allah will love me and people will love me.’ He said, ‘Do without the world and Allah will love you, and do without that which people have and people will love you.’”[399]

Ibn ʿAbbās ﵄ supplicated, “O Allah, make me content with what You have provided me, send blessings for me in it, and replace every absent thing with something better for me.”[400]

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[396] At-Tirmidhī, 2151. [Classed as ṣaḥīḥ by al-Ḥākim, 1/699, and adh-Dhahabī agreed with him. It was classed as ḥasan by al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar in Fath al-Bārī, 11/184]

[397] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

[398] Al-Bukhārī, 6490

[399] Ibn Mājah

[400] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*

CHAPTER 4

Love (*ḥubb*)

"And He has placed love (mawaddah) and compassion (raḥmah) between you."[401]

THE OXFORD DICTIONARY defines love as "a strong feeling of affection and sexual attraction for someone." The word 'love' originates from an Old English word of German origin *lufu* and is derived from an Indo-European root shared by the Sanskrit word *lubhyati* (desires), the Latin *libet* (pleasing) and *libido* (desire). Love has many definitions and meanings. It is an ineffable matter nature and reality many have struggled to explain. Love is of different types: love of Allah, love of family, friends, religion, spouses, children, and material objects. For the purpose of this chapter we are concentrating on sexual love. In classical Arabic the three main words for love are *ḥubb, mawaddah* and *maḥabbah*.

ḤUBB

Ibn Manẓūr said, "*Hubb* (love) is the opposite of hatred. *Ḥubb* means affection (*widād*) and attachment (*maḥabbah*)."[402]

Al-Azharī said, "*Ḥubb* is something which is beloved (*maḥbūb*). *Ḥubb* also can mean *ḥabīb* (the intensive form of 'the one who loves')."[403]

Ghazi said, "Etymologically the root of the word *ḥubb* is the word *ḥabb* (seed), thus evoking a seed that falls on the ground, sprouts, then brings forth a beautiful new plant. Allah makes this clear in the Qur'ān with His words; *'The metaphor of those who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah is that of a grain (ḥabbah) which produces seven ears; in every ear there are a*

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[401] Ar-Rūm 30: 21

[402] Ibn Manẓūr, 2003, vol. 2, p. 283

[403] Ibn Manẓūr, 2003, vol. 2, p. 283

hundred grains. Allah gives such multiplied increase to whomever He wills. Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.'[404] Thus love is like a seed from which a plant comes forth that Allah multiples as He wills."[405]

Proper names derived from *ḥubb* with meanings such as beloved, sweetheart and darling are *Ḥibb*, *Ḥibbah* (feminine), *Aḥbāb* (plural), *Maḥbūb*, *Ḥubāb*, *Muḥabb*, *Muḥibb*, *Muḥibbah*, *Ḥabīb*, *Ḥabībah* (feminine) and *Ḥubūb*. As is the case with beauty, love and its derivatives are also popular names: Habib (also spelt Habeeb), Habibah (Habeebah) and Mahbub (also spelt Mahboob) are popular Arabic names amongst Muslims and Arabic speaking peoples.

MAWADDAH

Ibn Manẓūr and az-Zabīdī said, "*Wudd* comes from the root *mawaddah* ... and it is said it is named after *muwaddah* which means love."

MAḤABBAH

Ar-Rāghib al-Isfahānī writes, "Love (*maḥabbah*) means the desire for what you know or deem to be good, and it has three aspects: love for pleasure, such as a man's love for a woman, as in *'they give food, despite their love for it, to the poor and orphans and captives'*;[406] love for benefit, such as one's love for something that benefits one, as in *'and [He will give you] other things you love'*;[407] and love for virtue, such as the love that knowledgeable people have for one another because of knowledge itself. Perhaps love (*maḥabbah*) may be thought to mean 'will' in such statements of Allah as in *'In it there are men who love to purify themselves,'*[408] but this is not the case, because love is more than just will, as stated. Every love is will, but not every will is love."

Ibn Manẓūr said, "*Maḥabbah* is another word for *ḥubb* (love)."

Az-Zabīdī said, "*Ḥubb* means affection (*widād*) and *maḥabbah.*"

Drawing from his study of love in the Qur'ān, Ghazi defined love as, "An inclination towards beauty after being pleased with it."[409]

Al-Ghazālī said, "In its ordinary usage, [human] 'love' means the soul's inclination to something which suits it and pleases it."[410]

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[404] Al-Baqarah 2: 261

[405] Ghazi, 2010. P. 13

[406] Al-Insān 76:8

[407] Aṣ-Ṣaff 61: 13

[408] At-Tawbah 9:108

[409] Ghazi, 2010, p.11

[410] Ghazi, 2010, p. 11

Ibn Ḥazm said, "Love is neither disapproved in religion, nor prohibited by the law, for every heart is in Allah's Hands."[411] "...In truth, love is a baffling ailment, and its remedy is in strict accord with the degree to which it is treated; it is a delightful malady, a most desirable sickness. Whoever is free of it likes not to be immune, and whoever is struck down by it yearns not to recover."[412]

Importance of Love

In sexual intercourse love is crucial, particularly for women. If a woman's heart is not filled with love it is difficult for her to enjoy sexual relations with her husband. Thus it is incumbent on the man to fill his lady's heart with love in order to enjoy the full pleasures of sexual play.

Ibn Falīta narrated that a poet said about mutual love,

"Life is only to love,
and be loved by your beloved."[413]

Another poet said,

"Life's best joy is to be a tempter and
To love and be loved."[414]

The following are some truisms[415] and words of wisdom about love and its importance,

Everyone says love hurts, but that is not true.
Loneliness hurts, rejection hurts, losing someone hurts, envy hurts.
Everyone gets these things confused with love,
but in reality love is the only thing in this world that covers up all pain and makes someone feel wonderful again.
Love is the only thing in this world that does not hurt.
When a man truly loves a woman, she becomes his weakness,
When a woman truly loves a man, he becomes her strength.

Al-Jāḥiẓ said, "While faith may be the most admirable form of obedience, it does not – unless combined with love – have the same effect upon a man as passion. The well-known proverb, 'Love makes blind and deaf'; but it is passion that will kill."[416]

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[411] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, p.17

[412] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, p.31

[413] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p.131

[414] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p.131

[415] A truism is a statement stating an undoubted or self-evident truth, especially one that is too obvious for mention .

Hunter S. Thompson observed, "Sex without love is as hollow and ridiculous as love without sex."

Helen Fisher wrote, "Romantic love lasts just over a year, perhaps because the brain cannot eternally maintain a revved-up state of romantic bliss. As romantic love wanes, attachment love, a more stable love, sets in. To keep the passion alive, experts suggest doing satisfying and exciting activities as a couple."[417]

A poet wrote:

Thinking about you makes me smile,
Seeing you gives me butterflies.
Talking about you gives me goosebumps,
And being around you lets me know that it's okay to fall in love.

Lao Tzu said, "Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone gives you courage."

Other poets and thinkers wrote:

There is a special someone for everyone

Where there is love, there is no darkness.

Love is the irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired.

Love in and of itself is just a word until you find someone who gives it meaning.

What is 'True Love'?

Ibn Ḥazm wrote, "If the cause of love were physical beauty, the consequence would be that nobody defective in any shape or form would attract admiration; yet we know of many a man actually preferring the inferior article, though well aware that another is superior, and quite unable to turn his heart away from it. Again, if love were due to a harmony of characters, no man would love a person who was not of like purpose and in concord with him. We therefore conclude that love is something within the soul itself. Sometimes, it is true, love comes as a result of a definite cause outside the soul, but then it passes away when the cause itself disappears; one who is fond of you because of a certain circumstance will turn his back on you when that motive no longer exists."[418]

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[416] Al-Jāḥiẓ, 2002, p. 173

[417] See Fisher, Helen, 2004, *Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love.*

He further observed, "All this proves that true love is a spiritual approbation, a fusion of souls. It may be objected that, if love were as I have described, it would be exactly equal in both the parties concerned, since the two parts would be partners in the act of union and the share of each would be the same."

"My theory is further proved by the fact that you will never find two persons in love with one another without there being some likeness and agreement of natural attributes between them. This condition must definitely obtain, even if only to a small degree; the more numerous the resemblances, the greater will be their congeniality and the firmer their affection. It is only necessary to look for this, and you will see it quite plainly on all hands. The Messenger of Allah confirmed the matter when he said, 'Spirits are assembled armies. Those who recognise one another are friendly to one another, and those who do not recognise one another disagree.'"[419]

Malik El-Shabazz, also known as Malcolm X said about the Islamic concept of love:

> Islam is the only religion that gives both husband and wife a true understanding of what love is. The Western 'love' concept, you take it apart, it really is lust. But love transcends just the physical. Love is disposition, behavior, attitude, thoughts, likes, dislikes – these things make a beautiful woman, a beautiful wife. This is the true beauty that never fades. You find in your Western civilization that when a man's wife's physical beauty fails, she loses her attraction. But Islam teaches us to look into the woman, and teaches her to look into us.[420]

LOVERS WITHOUT SEXUAL LOVE

Ibn Yaḥyā said, "As far as continence (i.e. sexual abstinence) is concerned, there are two kinds of lovers:

1 Lovers who are continent because they fear the Fire or disgrace [by divorcing]. Such lovers overcome their bodily desires and discipline their passions, although they suffer from such restraint.

2 Lovers who are continent because they are spiritual, and they prefer to imagine their beloveds and think about them rather than

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[418] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, pp. 21-24

[419] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, pp. 26-27; 'souls' are translated as 'spirits' in the translation.

[420] Malcolm X, 1965s, p. 334

> have possession of their bodies. Such lovers enjoy their beloveds only when their beloveds are out of their reach. Their enjoyment as a matter of fact lies in imagination through which they see their beloveds more beautiful. They are like a sleeper who in his dreams sees women more beautiful. If he happens to see himself copulating with a woman, he would experience greater pleasure than he would have in his wakefulness. The proof that a dreamer gets greater pleasure out of sexual intercourse is that the seminal fluid he ejaculates is more than that which he ejaculates in wakefulness. It is not to be doubted, however, that the more seminal fluid is ejaculated the greater the pleasure. There are, on the other hand, many things that in sleep seem greater than in wakefulness such as fear, delight, pleasure and lust. To such lovers belongs a lover who is also self-continent by nature. Such a lover abstains from many pleasures and so often causes a rift between himself and his beloved. However, it is not to be marvelled at, for people differ in nature."[421]

Ibn Falīta said, "Love is a personal emotion which has a particular nature of its own. Thus a person has his own likes, dislikes and ways of love. There are for instance, men, who, either out of chastity or impotence choose to talk to women and flirt with them without resorting to sexual intercourse. Such has been the way of love for the majority of the ancient lovers." Ibn Falīta continues, "There are also men whose penises are as stubborn as a horse in a battlefield but fail them when they are with their beloveds. Such men are not to be considered impotent. Rather their condition is caused by a lack of courage and by embarrassment which usually takes place either because of profound [love and] respect for one's beloved or because of a feeling of inferiority."[422]

The Defintion of Sexual Love

Sexual love is defined as a deep feeling of sexual desire and attraction. The term may also refer to sexual activities, often including sexual intercourse, between two people.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF LOVE?

Ibn Ḥazm says, "Concerning the nature of love, men have held various and divergent opinions, which they have debated at great length. For my part, I consider love as a conjunction between scattered parts of souls that have become divided in this physical universe, a union affected

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[421] Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, p. 19

[422] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 53

within the substance of their original sublime element. I do not share the view advanced by Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd, may Allah have mercy on his soul, who followed certain philosophers in declaring that souls are segmented spheres; rather do I suppose an affinity of their vital forces in the supernal world, which is their everlasting home, and a close approximation in the manner of their constitution. Allah Himself says, *'It is He who created you all from one soul, and from it made its mate so that he might find comfort in her.'*[423] Be it noted that the reason Allah assigns for man's reposing in woman is that she was made out of him."[424]

DOES ALLAH TESTS HUMANS WITH LOVE?

Even though love for other human beings is not forbidden in and of itself, Allah can test us with love to test our obedience to and love for Him. As a believer, the love of Allah should be first and foremost, followed by the love of His final Messenger ﷺ. 'Unconditional love', which is often spoken about nowadays, should be reserved for Allah alone, as only He deserves to be loved unconditionally, to which the following Qur'ānic verse alludes, "*Say: 'If your fathers or your sons or your brothers or your wives or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any house which pleases you, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and doing* jihād *in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His command. Allah does not guide people who are deviators.'*"[425]

The following *ḥadīth*s illustrates how a Muslim may be tested with love.

Ibn ʿUmar narrated, "I had a wife whom I loved but ʿUmar [his father] disliked her. He asked me to divorce her and when I refused, ʿUmar went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and mentioned the matter to him and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked me to divorce her."[426] *Ḥadīth* commentators have said that ʿUmar asked his son to divorce his wife because she was not good for his *dīn*.

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ narrated, "Marthad ibn Abī Marthad al-Ghanawī used to take prisoners [of war] from Makkah [to Madinah]. In Makkah there was a prostitute called ʿAnāq who was his close friend (*ṣiddīqah*). [Marthad said] 'I came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "Can I marry ʿAnāq, Messenger of Allah?"'" The narrator said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ remained silent. Then the *āyat* was revealed, *"A man who*

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[423] Al-Aʿrāf 7: 189

[424] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, pp. 23-24

[425] At-Tawbah 9: 24

[426] At-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Aḥmad.

has fornicated may only marry a woman who has fornicated or a woman of the idolators. A woman who has fornicated may only marry a man who has fornicated or a man of the idolators. Doing such a thing is unlawful for the believers."[427] [Marthad] said, "The Prophet called me and recited the *āyat* to me and said, 'Do not marry her.'"[428]

There are also examples in the Bible of God testing human beings with human love, such as the story of the ancient Israelite Samson whom God gave supernatural strength that endured as long as he did not cut his hair. According to the Bible, Samson met and fell in love with a dangerous temptress called Delilah, who used his love for her to find out the secret of his power. After finding out the secret behind Samson's supernatural power, Delilah betrayed him for monetary gain.

> Delilah pouted, "How can you tell me, 'I love you,' when you don't share your secrets with me. You've made fun of me three times now, and you still haven't told me what makes you so strong!" She tormented him with her nagging day after day until he was sick to death of it.
>
> Finally, Samson shared his secret with her. "My hair has never been cut," he confessed, "for I was dedicated to God as a Nazarite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else."
>
> Delilah realised he has finally told her the truth, so she sent for the Philistine rulers. "Come back one more time," she said, "for he has finally told me his secret." So the Philistine rulers returned with the money in their hands. Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and then she called in a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. In this way she began to bring him down, and his strength left him.
>
> Then she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" When he woke up, he thought, "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realise the Lord had left him.[429]

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[427] An-Nūr 24: 3 "This is not an injunction but a statement of fact, emphasising the guilt of both. There is another opinion that *yankiḥu* is used in its original sense of 'copulate'. Whichever translation is used, this is not part of the punishment but a condemnation of the crime." Footnote by Abdel Haleem, 2010, *The* Qur'ān*: English Translation* p. 351

[428] Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 2046, an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3228

[429] Judges 16: 15-20

CAN A MUSLIM LOVE A NON-MUSLIM?

It goes without saying that it is possible for a Muslim to fall in love with a non-Muslim and vice versa. Muslims are human beings and can fall in love with someone of any religious domination. However the Sacred Law has only permitted Muslim men to marry Muslim women or women from the 'People of the Book' i.e. Jewish and Christian women, a permission circumscribed with provisos by the people of knowledge. ʿUmar forbade an eminent Companion from marrying a woman of the People of the Book because his standing might lead many men to imitate him with the result that too many Muslim women would remain unmarried. Conversely, Muslim women are only permitted to marry Muslim men.

LOVE IS NOT THE SAME AS SEX

The notion of 'true love' is highly subjective. Whereas a woman's heart is generally only for one man at a time, there are men who are able to love and sexually desire more than one woman at a time. Sexual fidelity is not the same as love in the eyes of many men. Among traditional Muslims, it was inconceivable that a man could not love more than one woman. The Prophet ﷺ, like many of his male Companions, was in love with more than one of his wives, though he felt more love for some wives than for others. Speaking about the nature of a man's love, a Muslim writer, who describes herself as a 'happily married first wife' to a polygynous husband, said,

> "One of the biggest fears women have of polygamy comes from a misunderstanding about the nature of love. Love is seen as something finite which has to be shared between people, so if a man takes a second wife, it's assumed that he must love his first wife less because of it. The truth is that love is infinite and does not need to be shared between people. Just as when a mother has a second child she still loves her first child as much as ever, when a man takes a second wife he still loves his first wife just as much. Good Muslim men who choose polygamy do so because they truly want to love and protect two or more women. If he really didn't love the first, divorcing her then remarrying is a much easier option for him both financially and emotionally than having two wives."[430]

Studies conducted by neuropsychologist Dr. Anne Moir have shown that men in general desire multiple sexual partners even if they are in love with one or more of their partners. In contrast, women who are in love with their partner, rarely desire to have intercourse with anyone else. For men, sexual relations are not the same as love. Dr. Anne Moir and David Jessel explain in their book how men can easily treat sex as an isolated event and women as objects. Moir and Jessel mention that a man is probably being truthful when, after having an affair, he says, "It didn't mean anything." But the event will be a shock for the woman because, for her, sex is inseparable from intimacy and love. They write, quoting a fellow psychologist, "Women want a lot of sex with the man they love, while men want a lot of sex."[431] Such is the nature and reality of love amongst the sexes even though some women may find this matter unsettling to their hearts and abhorrent to the mind.

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[430] Umm Ruqayya, 'Polygamy Survival Guide' November 2012, pp. 53-54.

Signs of Sexual Love

Allah says, "*On the night of the fast it is lawful for you to have sexual relations (rafath) with your wives. They are clothing (libās) for you and you for them. Allah knows that you have been betraying yourselves and He has turned towards you and excused you. Now you may have sexual intercourse with them (bāshirūhunn) and seek what Allah has written for you.*"[432]

Jalāl ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrates;

> In one of the nights of Ramadan, ʿUmar returned home after conversing into the small hours with the Prophet ﷺ. His wife was already fast asleep, but ʿUmar desired her and proceeded to wake her up.
> "But I have slept!" she protested.[433]
> "Well, I haven't slept!" ʿUmar retorted and he then made love to her. After showering ritually in the wake of intercourse, ʿUmar, wracked with guilt over his violation, burst into tears. He wept his way over to the Prophet's house, where he confessed his misdeed: "My wife appeared beautiful to me and I slept with her!"
> Begging forgiveness, ʿUmar said "might you find me some sort of indulgence, Messenger of Allah?" Soon thereafter, the *āyat* "*Allah knows that you have been betraying yourselves and He has turned towards you and excused you*" was revealed.[434]

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[431] Moir and Jessel, 1991..

[432] Al-Baqarah 2: 187.

[433] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrates in his *Lubāb an-nuqūl fi asbāb an-nuzūl* that in the early days after the revelation of Ramadan, spouses might make love before sleeping, but once they had slept before the dawn they refrained from sexual intercourse.

[434] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī *Asbab an-Nuzul, p. 31;* al-Baqarah 2: 187. This story is also recorded by al-Bukhārī.

Addressing the male believers, *"On the night of the fast it is lawful for you to have sexual relations (rafath) with your wives"* Allah informs them that it is now *ḥalāl* (permissible) for them to have sexual relations with *"your wives"* i.e. their wives and concubines, in the nights of Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting. The *āyat* euphemistically uses the word "*approach (rafath)*" to indicate sexual intercourse, according to Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAtā' and Mujāhid. Ibn Kāthir says, "These verses contain a dispensation from Allah for the Muslims by ending the practice that was observed in the early years of Islam. At that time, Muslims were allowed to eat, drink and have sexual intercourse from sunrise until *ʿIshā'* (the night prayer) or until one sleeps before *ʿIshā'*."[435]

Interpreting the words of Allah, "*They are clothing (libās) for you and you for them*" Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāḥid, Sa ʿīd ibn Jubayr, al-Ḥasan, Qatādah, as-Suddī and Muqātil ibn Ḥayyan said it means, "Your wives are a resort for you and you for them." Acclaimed exegete Ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī stated that this description most aptly describes "the act of intimacy between the spouses, for during that act, each spouse sheds his or her outer garments and then wraps them around the other, taking the place of clothes". Al-Qurṭubī adds that, just as clothes protect their wearers from external elements, similarly each spouse protects the other from external passions that would harm a marriage.[436]

The Qur'ān then encourages men to have sexual relations with their wives using the euphemistic expression *"touch or embrace them (bashirūhunn)"* connoting intimacy. The *āyat* continues, *"and seek what Allah has written for you"* meaning offspring, as interpreted by Abū Hurayrah, Ibn ʿAbbās, Anas and other Companions.

Every Culture has their Own Way of Conveying Love

Ibn Ḥazm says:

> Love has certain signs, which the intelligent man quickly detects, and the shrewd man readily recognises. Of these the first is the brooding gaze: the eye is the wide gateway of the soul, the scrutinizer of its secrets, conveying its most private thoughts, and giving expression to its deepest-hidden feelings. You will see the lover gazing at the beloved unblinkingly; his eyes follow the loved one's every movement, withdrawing as she withdraws, inclining as she inclines, just as the chameleon's stare shifts with the shifting of the sun.

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[435] Ibn al-Jawzī, 2002, p. 108

[436] Qadhi, *Like a Garment*, p. 1

> The lover will direct his conversation to the beloved, even when she purports however earnestly to address another: the affectation is apparent to anyone with eyes to see. When the loved one speaks, the lover listens with rapt attention to her every word; he marvels at everything the beloved says, however extraordinary and absurd her observations may be; he believes her implicitly even when she is clearly lying, agrees with her though she is obviously in the wrong, testifies on her behalf for all that she may be unjust, follows after her however she may proceed and whatever line of argument she may adopt. The lover hurries to the spot where the beloved is at the moment, endeavours to sit as near her as possible, sidles up close to her, lays aside all occupations that might oblige him to leave her company, makes light of any matter however weighty that would demand his parting from her, is very slow to move when he takes his leave of her.
>
> Other signs of love are that sudden confusion and excitement betrayed by the lover when he unexpectedly sees the one he loves coming upon him unawares, that agitation which overmasters him on beholding someone who resembles his beloved or, on hearing her name suddenly pronounced.
>
> A man in love will give prodigally to the limit of his capacity, in a way that formerly he would have refused, as if he were the one receiving the donation, he the one whose happiness is the object in view; all this in order that he may show off his good points, and make himself desirable. How often has the miser opened his purse strings, the scowler relaxed his frown, the coward leapt heroically into the fray, the clod suddenly become sharp-witted, the boor turned into the perfect gentleman, the stinker transformed himself into the elegant dandy, the sloucher smartened up, the decrepit recaptured his lost youth, the godly gone wild, the self-respecting kicked over the traces-and all because of love![437]

The Yoruba proverb says, "Outward expression of love does not come from within; people who will look after others' interests in their absence are few; only a few people love one when one is absent, though every dog and goat loves a person in his presence."[438] It means that one cannot trust that those who love one when present will love one when absent.

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[437] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, pp. 33-47

[438] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 398

It can also be interpreted to mean that public displays of affection do not necessarily indicate true love.[439]

The Love Marriage

Islam encourages men as well as women to seek love in marriage as the following Qur'ānic *āyats* and prophetic traditions demonstrate:

> *"Among His Signs is that He created spouses for you of your own kind so that you might find tranquillity in them. And He has placed love (mawaddah) and compassion (raḥmah) between you. There are certainly Signs in that for people who reflect."*[440]

In his Qur'ānic exegesis, al-Bayḍāwī said "love (*mawaddah*) in this *āyat* is said to be a metaphor (*kināyah*) for sexual intercourse (*jimāʿ*) and compassion (*raḥmah*) is said to be a metaphor for a child."[441] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī also narrated that love (*mawaddah*) in the verse relates to sexual intercourse (*jimāʿ*).[442]

Ibn ʿAbbās related that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said "Messenger of Allah! I am an orphan girl's guardian. Two men proposed to her, but one of them is wealthy and the other is poor. We would like to marry her to the wealthy man, but she desires the poor man!" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "There is nothing like marriage for two people in love."[443]

The Prophet ﷺ was not ashamed to speak about his love for women. When asked whom he loved the most, he answered, " ʿĀ'ishah."[444] Some of the Companions even publicly expressed their love for their beloved. Upon seeing one of his love-sick Companions following a former wife in the streets of Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ remarked, "Are you not amazed by Mughīth's love for Barīrah?!"[445]

In a tradition related in *Kanz al-ʿummāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa'l-afʿāl* the Messenger of Allah ﷺ says, "When a man glances at his wife and she glances at him [with love and affection], Allah Most High looks at them with mercy. When he holds her hand [with love and affection], their wrong actions fall from the gaps between their fingers."[446]

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[439] Ibid

[440] Ar-Rum 30: 21

[441] Al-Bayḍāwī, vol. 2, p. 809,

[442] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 166

[443] Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1920

[444] Al-Bukhārī

[445] Al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb aṭ-ṭalāq, 2231

THE GREATEST LOVE MARRIAGE

The greatest love marriage in the history of Islam was arguably the marriage between the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his beloved first wife, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. The Prophet ﷺ married Khadijah when he was twenty-five years old and she was forty years. Despite being fifteen years older and much richer than the Prophet ﷺ, Khadijah was drawn to the Prophet ﷺ after she had heard about his integrity, honesty and principled behaviour. She sent a job offer to him to head her trading caravans, which he gladly accepted and started working for her. Khadijah later proposed to the Prophet ﷺ via her uncle and the Prophet ﷺ accepted. They lived a fruitful married life filled with love, trust, honour and loyalty.

Even when Khadjah passed away and the Prophet ﷺ remarried, he would fondly speak well of his wife when he was reminded by her. On one occasion when his beautiful but jealous wife, A'ishah spoke in disparaging terms of Khadijah, wondering why the Prophet ﷺ missed her when he was blessed with a "better and younger wife." The Prophet ﷺ replied:

> I have not yet found a better wife than her. She had faith in me when everyone, even members of my own family and tribe did not believe me, and accepted that I was truly a Prophet ﷺ and a Messenger of Allah. She embraced Islam, spent all her wealth, and worldly goods to help me spread this faith, and this too at a time when the entire world seemed to have turned against me and persecuted me. And it is through her that Allah blessed me with children."[447]

Prophetic Guidance on Romantic Love

Described as the feeling of excitement and mystery associated with love, romance brings passion and excitement to a relationship that might otherwise lack it. It is truly a nebulous thing – easily describable but indefinable. Women crave romance and, being loving and affectionate towards them is from the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Treating women well is one of the virtues that the Qur'ān enjoins upon the male believers.

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446 *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl fī sunan al-Aqwāl al al-Afʿāl*, 44437; al-Kawtharī, 2008, p. 62. The aforementioned tradition was reported to have been said by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ but there is a weak chain of transmission.

447 Ghadandar,2001, pp. 22-23

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ embodied this Qur'ānic injunction in his life and encouraged men to do the same, saying, "I urge you to treat women kindly. The best of you are those who are kindest to their wives."[448]

And in another tradition he said, "The best of you are those who are best to their wives and I am the best amongst you towards my wives!"[449]

A model husband, the Prophet ﷺ treated his wives with love, compassion and due consideration. He dealt with them on an equal footing, devoted a night to each in turn, helped with housework, mended his own clothes, shared the ups and downs of life with them, listened to their views and gave them the chance to develop their own individuality, independence and talent.[450] Despite being married to a number of women, he made each of them feel loved, appreciated and honoured; such was the exalted character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Allah said truly, "*Indeed you are truly vast in character.*"[451]

In addressing the issue of Prophet Muḥammad's polygynous marriages, it is important to remember a couple of points: first, Allah gave the Prophet ﷺ special dispensation to marry beyond the usual limit of four wives; and second, during his time, Semitic culture in general and Arab practice in particular permitted polygyny.[452] As was customary for nobles and leaders, many of the Prophet's marriages had the dual function of cementing alliances. Others were marriages to widows of Companions who had fallen in combat and were in need of protection. Nevertheless, talk of the political, legislative and social motives behind many of the Prophet's marriages should not obscure the fact that he ﷺ married some beautiful women whom he loved and desired.[453] But at a certain point, Allah ﷻ revealed a limit to the number of his wives when He revealed, "*After that no other women are ḥalāl for you nor may you exchange them for other wives, even though their beauty might be pleasing to you.*"[454]

Arguably one of the most romantic men to walk on the face of this Earth, the Prophet's life is not one just to admire and marvel at, but one to draw inspiration from for one's own life. Despite being married to several women at one time, the Prophet ﷺ managed to fulfil all his wives' emotional and physical needs. Such was the greatness of the Messenger of Allah's loving treatment of his wives that even women of exquisite beauty and high nobility offered themselves in marriage to him. Naturally some of his wives were jealous, but they remained faithful and loyal to him because they were deeply in love with him. The Prophet ﷺ was able to nurture love in the hearts of his wives by his loving behaviour and integrity. He never lied or deceived women regarding his polygynous marital arrangement. Lying is the antithesis of faith and such a quality is not befitting of a person of faith, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught.

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[448] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

[449] *Ibn Ḥibbān, 4165, Ibn Mājah, 1977*

[450] Jawad, 1998, p. 13

[451] Al-Qalam 68: 4

[452] The maximum number of women Muslim men are allowed to be married to at one time is four. However the Prophet ﷺ was given special dispensation to marry more than four women.

[453] Biale, 1984, pp. 49-51

[454] Al-Aḥzāb 33: 52

When asked by one of his Companions, "Can a believer be a coward?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes, he can be a coward." "Can a believer be a miser?" he was asked. He replied, "Yes, he can be a miser." But when asked whether a believer could be a liar, he replied, "No, a believer cannot be a liar."[455]

ʿĀ'ishah, the beloved wife of the Prophet ﷺ, reported that he would kiss her before leaving the house and would call her pet names like 'the red little one' and *ʿĀ'ish*. In another tradition, ʿĀ'ishah said that the Prophet ﷺ was the most gentle of husbands and would always keep the company of a wife who had a complaint or was ill.[456] Attentive to his wives' needs and concerns, he ﷺ used to greet each of them on a daily basis and ask after their welfare. This affectionate treatment was not restricted to his household. ʿĀ'ishah narrated that he used to protectively shield her as they watched Abyssinians entertain people in the mosque during Eid, and he would race with her after returning from an expedition. Another of his wives, Umm Salamah, said to Zaynab bint Abī Salamah, "I got my menses when I was lying with the Prophet ﷺ under a single woollen sheet. I slipped away and put on the clothes I usually wore for menstruation. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me, "Have you got your menses?" I said, "Yes." Then he called me and made me lie with him under the same sheet."

Umm Salamah also said that the Prophet ﷺ used to kiss her when he was fasting, and they used to bathe together from one vessel.[457] ʿĀ'ishah said, "I used to drink from the same glass even when menstruating, and the Prophet ﷺ took the glass and put his mouth on the same spot where I had put my mouth, and then he drank."

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[455] Mālik, *Kitāb al-kalām*, no. 1832

[456] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

[457] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

When they used to eat together, he would eat meat from ʿĀ'ishah's hand and place his mouth on the same place from which she ate .[458]

Anas ibn Mālik narrates, "I saw the Prophet ﷺ making a kind of cushion for her [Ṣafiyyah] behind him [on his camel] with his cloak. He then sat beside the camel and placed his knee for Ṣafiyyah to put her foot on in order to mount [the camel]."[459]

Once the Prophet ﷺ was sitting in a room with ʿĀ'ishah, fixing his shoes. It was very warm, and ʿĀ'ishah looked at his forehead and noticed beads of sweat on it. She became overwhelmed by the majesty of that sight and was staring at him long enough for him to notice. He said, "What's the matter?" She replied, "If Abū Bukayr al-Hudhalī the poet had seen you, he would have known that his poem was written for you." He asked, "What did he say?" She replied, "Abū Bukayr said: look at the majesty of the moon, it twinkles and lights up the world for everybody to see." The Prophet ﷺ stood up, walked to ʿĀ'ishah, kissed her between the eyes, saying, "By Allah, ʿĀ'ishah, you are like that to me and more."[460]

A man of impeccable character, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a man whom women adored and men loved, admired and respected. He was and remains the perfect model for any man who wants to know how to attain the love and respect of women.

> *"You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah,*
> *for all who put their hope in Allah and the Last*
> *Day and remember Allah much."*[461]

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458 Muslim

459 Al-Bukhārī

460 *Dalā'il an-nubuwwah* by Imam Abū Nuʿaym with an *isnād* including Imam al-Bukhārī and Imam Ibn Khuzaymah.

461 Al-Aḥzāb 33:21

CHAPTER 5

Fidelity (*ᶜiffah*)

"Those who guard their private parts – except from their wives or those they own as slaves, in which case they are not blameworthy; but those who desire anything more than that are people who have gone beyond the limits"[462]

DERIVED FROM THE French *fidelite* and the Latin *fidelitas* (faithful), in the more restricted sense we use here, fidelity is defined as "sexual faithfulness to a spouse or partner."[463] About the Arabic word, Ibn Manẓūr said, "ᶜ*Iffah* means refraining from that which is not permissible."[464] From the Islamic perspective the only permissible forms of sexual relations are within the confines of marriage and concubinage. As concubinage is no longer practised, I will focus on marriage in this chapter.

Marriage (*nikāḥ*)

Described in the Qur'ān as a *"binding contract"*[465] between a man and his wife, marriage is a fundamental institution of a healthy human society. Indeed, it is highly recommended on religious, moral and social grounds. Prior to the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, there were four types of polygynous and polyandrous marriage amongst pre-Islamic Arabs, but the Prophet abrogated them except for the present-day form of marriage, which is either monogamous or polygynous.

Allah ﷻ said, "... *then marry other permissible women, two, three or four.*"[466]

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[462] Al-Mu'minūn 23: 5-7

[463] Oxford Dictionary

[464] Ibn Manẓūr, 2003, vol. 6, p. 334

[465] An-Nisā' 4: 21 "... *you have been intimate with one another and they have made a binding contract with you?.*"

[466] An-Nisā' 4: 3

The topic of marriage is a subject about which many books have been written, and so this work will have no further discussion on the jurisprudential rulings relating to marriage except as to how they relate to sexual intercourse, which is often cited as the primary reason for marriage.

Marriage and Sexual Intercourse

Marriage and sexual intercourse are invariably linked in traditional Islam as is evident by the definition of marriage by the Malikite jurisprudential compendium *adh-Dhakhīrah*, "The marriage contract (*ʿaqd an-nikāh*) permits each spouse [the right of] sexual intercourse along with other forms intimacy, in any situation and at all times except those which the Sacred Law or custom (*ʿurf*) have prohibited."[467]

The etymology of the word commonly referred to as marriage in traditional Islam, *nikāḥ* shows the link between the importance of sexual relations and marriage. Derived from the word *nukḥ* (vagina), *nikāḥ* comprises three root letters, *na-ka-ḥa*. Linguistically, *nikāḥ* is defined as the penetration of one thing by another. It is also used to mean the embrace of or entwining of one thing with another. An example is the saying "the trees *nakaḥa* each other" meaning they entwined with one another. *Nikāḥ* is often used figuratively to refer to marriage. Al-Fassi said, "If someone says that a man *nakaḥa* a woman, it means he married her, and if it is said that a man *nakaḥa* his wife, it means he had sexual intercourse with her." This is an example of a common Arabic rhetorical device whereby an action is given the name of the objective of that particular action. As the objective of marriage is sexual intercourse, thus marriage is commonly referred to as *nikāḥ*.[468]

The Qur'ān uses the word *nikāḥ* to denote four different meanings: marriage, sexual intercourse, bestowal, and marriageable age. As for the first meaning, in the Qur'ān Allah says, *"Do not marry (tankiḥū) women of the idolators until they believe."*[469]

The same meaning is used in Sūrat an-Nisā', *"Marry them (fankiḥūhunn) with their owners' permission"*[470] and, in another *āyat*, *"then marry (fankiḥū) other permissible women, two, three or four."*[471]

Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Maḥalli and his student Jalāl ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said in their classical exegesis of the Qur'ān, *Tafsīr al-*

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[467] Ath-Thaqafah, vol. 3, p. 585

[468] Procreation is oft-cited as one of the primary purposes of marriage.

[469] Al-Baqarah 2: 221

[470] An-Nisā' 4: 25

[471] An-Nisā' 4: 3

Jalālayn, when Allah said *fankiḥū* it means *fatazawwajū* (marry).

The second meaning of the word *nikāḥ*, which is sexual intercourse, occurs in Sūrat al-Baqarah, "*until she has married (tankiḥa) another husband.*"[472]

The third meaning, marriage of bestowal, is found in Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, "*and any believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet if the Prophet desires to marry her (tastankiḥahā): exclusively for you as opposed to the rest of the believers.*"[473]

The fourth meaning, marriageable age, is in the *āyat*, "*Keep a close check on orphans until they reach a marriageable age (nikāḥ).*"[474]

The Prophet used the word *nikāḥ* in a way which is interpreted either as marriage or sexual intercourse, "Usury (*ribā'*)[475] has seventy parts, the least of which is that a man should have sexual intercourse (*yankiḥu*) with his mother."[476]

Benefits of Marriage

A summary of the main benefits of marriage are as follows:

SEXUAL PLEASURE

An unbreakable relationship contains mutual love, trust, loyalty and great sex. He ﷺ said, "There is nothing like marriage for two people in love."[477]

SUNNAH OF THE PROPHET

He ﷺ said, "Marriage is of my Sunnah. And whoever does not practise my Sunnah is not of me."[478]

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[472] Al-Baqarah 2: 230

[473] Al-Aḥzāb 33: 50

[474] An-Nisā' 4: 6

[475] Consuming *ribā* (usury or interest) is a heinous wrong action in Islam and is arguably a greater wrong than adultery as a prophetic tradition related by Aḥmad indicates. ʿAbdullāh ibn Hanẓalah reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Knowingly consuming a dirham of *ribā* is worse for a man than committing adultery (*zinā*) thirty-six times." (Aḥmad 5/225). In the Qur'ān, Allah does not declare war on anyone except *mu'minūn* who deal in usury, which indicates the enormity of this wrongdoing. "*You who believe! have taqwā of Allah and forgo any remaining riba if you are believers. If you do not, know that it means war from Allah and from His Messenger.*" (2:278-279)

[476] Ibn Mājah and al-Bayhaqī.

[477] Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1920

[478] Ibn Mājah, 1846; al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4776. There is also, "By Allah, I am the one among you with the most fear and awareness of Allah, but I fast and break the fast, I pray and I sleep, and I marry women. Whoever disdains my Sunnah is not of me."

Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Marry! for the best of this community are those who have the largest number of wives!"[479]

He ﷺ said, "Four things are from the Sunnah of the Messengers: using henna, perfume, the toothstick (*siwāk*), and marriage."[480]

Ibn ʿAbbās said, "Proclaim marriage, for that is the custom of your father Adam. There is nothing more beloved to Allah than marriage and nothing more hateful in His sight than divorce."[481]

PROCREATION

One of the main benefits of marriage is procreation. The institution of marriage ensures that the process of bringing children into the world and their upbringing is sanctified and orderly, not vulgar and chaotic. From the religious point of view, having children entails the following: the realisation of Allah's desire to further the species but not merely in terms of numbers but with those who will know Him and worship Him; the fulfilment of the Prophet's call to marry and increases his community's numbers; and the parents' gaining the fruits of a child's prayers. A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "I have obtained a woman of high birth and beauty, but she cannot bear children. Should I marry her?" The Prophet ﷺ replied: "No." The man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ a second time and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Marry affectionate and fruitful women, for I would boast of your numbers before the other communities!"[482]

RELIGIOUS DUTY

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "When the slave of Allah marries, he has fulfilled half the faith."[483]

He ﷺ is reported to have advised his community to choose suitable spouses who would help them attain Divine blessings, "Seek to have a grateful heart, a sweet tongue and a believing, righteous wife who would help you in your endeavour to succeed on the Last Day."[484]

Al-Ghazālī explains, "The third benefit of marriage is that the heart

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Muslim *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3236; an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3217

479 Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5069. The Prophet ﷺ was the best of this community as he had the largest number of wives and thus is the precedent.

480 Some narrations state "modesty" instead of "henna". At-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1080

481 Al-Kisā'ī, 1997, p. 33

482 An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3227, Abū Dāwūd, 2050

483 *Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ*

484 Unable to find the source of this oft-quoted *ḥadīth*.

finds ease through intimacy with women, because of sitting and joking with them. This ease then becomes the cause of an increase in desire for worship. For diligence in worship brings weariness, and the heart contracts. But ease acquired in this way brings back the heart's strength."[485]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Nothing is more beneficial to a believer after God-consciousness than a righteous wife, who, if he command her she obeys him, if he looks at her he is pleased, if he swears an oath concerning her she fulfils it, and when he is away from her she is faithful to him with regard to her person and his wealth."[486]

He ﷺ said, "Whoever wishes to meet Allah pure and purified, should marry free women."[487]

It is reported that Ṭāwūs said, "The worship and devotion of a young person are not complete until he marries."[488]

PROTECTS CHASTITY

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah relates the following about the benefits of marriage, "Among its benefits are lowering the gaze, self-restraint and the ability to refrain from what is forbidden, which the woman may also attain. So it brings benefit to the soul in the present and future life, and it brings benefit to the woman. Therefore the Prophet ﷺ engaged in it frequently and with delight and he would say, "Of this world of yours, women and perfume are [most] beloved to me.""[489]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "O group of young men, anyone [of you] who has the ability to have coition (*bā'ah*) should marry, for it lowers the gaze and guards the private parts. Anyone who is unable, should fast, for it is a shield for him."[490] The ability to have *bā'ah* (coition) – also spelt *bāh* – either literally means coition or it means marriage, as an-Nawawi explained in his commentary on the *ḥadīth*. According to an-Nawawi there are two opinions amongst the scholars: some are of the opinion that the word *bā'ah* refers to sexual intercourse, whilst others say that it means the affordability of marriage, but both result in the same meaning. As the first interpretation is understood as 'whoever is able to have intercourse because he can afford the expenses of marriage, then let him marry' and the second interpretation means 'whoever can afford marriage, then let him marry, but whoever is unable to have intercourse because he cannot afford the expenses of marriage, then let him fast in order to control his desire'.[491]

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[485] Jawad, 1998, p. 31

[486] Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1857

[487] Ibn Mājah, 1862; al-Mundhirī, 2973 but the *ḥadīth* is weak.

[488] Ibrāhīm ibn Maysurah reported that Ṭāwūs said to him, "You better get married or I will say to you what ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said to Abū az-Zaw'id, "Nothing but impotence or sinfulness is preventing you from getting married!" Adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām an-nubalā'*, in his biography of Ṭāwūs.

[489] Aḥmad

[490] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5065, 5066 and Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1400. at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1081, An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3207, 3208, 3209, 3210, 3211. In another narration by an-Nasā'ī, it was reported that the Prophet ﷺ said "whoever amongst you is capable (*dhā ṭawl*), should get married". an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3206; Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1918; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4015

Marriage prevents people from becoming involved in illicit relations. The Prophet ﷺ warned those who try to prevent two people who want to marry, "When someone whose *dīn* and character you are pleased with comes to you, then marry him [to your daughter or ward]. If you do not do so, there will be turmoil (*fitnah*) in the land and widespread discord and corruption (*fasād*)." Some people asked, "Messenger of Allah, what if there was something about him?" He replied, "When someone whose religion and character you are pleased with comes to you, then marry him [to her]. If you do not do so, then there will be turmoil (*fitnah*) in the land and widespread discord and corruption (*fasād*)." He repeated this three times.[492]

Al-Ghazālī said, "When a man's nature is so dominated by sexual desire that one wife alone would not suffice to keep him chaste, it is recommended that he take more than one (up to a maximum of four) wife. All is then well, provided he enjoys the love and mercy of Allah, and feels inwardly content with these wives. Otherwise, substitution is recommended."[493]

After the death of his beloved wife Fātimah, Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib remarried in seven days. Al-Ḥasan ibn Alī, the Prophet's ﷺ grandson, has been called a 'super-marrier' (*minkāh*); he married over two hundred women. He sometimes contracted four marriages at the same time, and sometimes divorced all four wives at once, taking others in their stead. Some of the Companions had three or four wives, while those who had two wives were too numerous to count.[494]

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[491] An-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*, p. 868

[492] At-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1085

[493] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 26

[494] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, pp. 26-27

A SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

He ﷺ said, "Four things are part of happiness: a righteous wife, a spacious dwelling, a righteous neighbour and a comfortable mount. Four things are part of misery: a wretched neighbour, a wretched wife, a constricted dwelling and a wretched mount."[495]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Whoever Allah bestows a good wife upon, Allah has helped him with half of his *dīn*. So he should fear Allah with the other half."[496]

EARN DIVINE REWARDS

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "A man will be rewarded for what he spends on his wife, even for putting a morsel of food into her mouth"[497] and, "Whoever wishes to meet Allah pure and purified, let him marry free women."[498]

WOMEN BRING WEALTH

In addition there are unexpected benefits, for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Marry women! For they bring wealth with them."[499]

PROSELYTISATION

Proselytisation is the conversion of someone from one religion to another. Marriage can be a form of invitation to Islam (*daʿwah*) for Jewish and Christian women. After witnessing first-hand the conduct of their Muslim husbands, many such women have embraced Islam, although there are not inconsiderable numbers for whom this is not the case and indeed, regrettably, it is sometimes the opposite. Deeds are according to their intentions.

INCREASE IN STATUS

Having a number of wives increases a man's status both in the Sacred Law and in traditional societies, Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ said. The Sacred Law only permits polygyny to men who have the capacity in all senses of the term. Marriage is a responsibility not to be taken lightly; only men who are going to be just in their dealings with their wives are allowed to take additional wives. If they are not able to do so, in the Qur'ān Allah tells men that they should be content with one, *"If you are afraid of not behaving justly towards orphans, then marry other permissible women, two, three or four.*

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495 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4021

496 Al-Ḥākim said the *ḥadīth* is sound

497 Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

498 Ibn Majah

499 Al-Ḥākim said the *ḥadīth* is sound, but adh-Dhahabī said it's weak

But if you are afraid of not treating them equally, then only one, or those you own as slaves. That makes it more likely that you will not be unfair."[500]

The Husband's God-Given Right to Intercourse

Al-Bazzār reported on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, "A woman said, 'Messenger of Allah! Tell me what right a husband has over his wife?' He replied, 'The husband has the right over his wife that if he seeks sexual intercourse with her, even if she is on the back of a camel she should not refuse him.'"[501]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "By the One in whose Hands is my life, there is not a man who calls his wife to his bed and she refuses except that the inhabitants of heaven become angry with her until her husband is pleased with her."[502]

And he ﷺ said, "When a man calls his wife for the fulfilment of his sexual need, she must go, even if she is [busy] in the kitchen."[503]

And, "A woman must not fast [i.e. an optional fast] whilst her husband is with her without his permission."[504]

The aforementioned *ḥadīths* caution women against using sex as a weapon against their husbands, an occurrence that is all too common; they are not to be taken as misogynistic. Women have a high place and are to be treated with respect and dignity. The *ḥadīths* which emphasise the importance of wives complying with their husband's sexual desires are in order to protect both their husbands' chastity and the harmony of the marriage. As shown in chapter two, men are often weak in regards to their desires for sexual relations. Thus in order to help them overcome this weakness, Muslim wives should comply with their advances, unless they have mitigating circumstances. Muslim woman writer Huda Khattab explained some of the wisdom behind the *ḥadīths*, "The wife is not allowed to refuse sex to her husband. This is because, in Islam, marriage is the only legitimate outlet for the natural sexual urge. If you deny your husband this right, you may be forcing him to go beyond the bounds of

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[500] An-Nisā' 4: 3

[501] Al-Mundhirī, 3006, the *ḥadīth* is weak

[502] Muslim, 1436, Al-Bukhārī, 3065

[503] At-Tirmidhī, 1160

[504] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5192 *ḥadīth* commentators say that this is because her husband may want to have sexual intercourse with her, so she should first seek his permission to perform a voluntary fast, as the Prophet ﷺ instructed.

Islam." She later adds, "This right to sexual gratification is reciprocal, the wife has the same right."[505]

Al-Ghazālī said, "Marriage is a kind of slavery, for a wife is [like] a slave to her husband. She owes her husband absolute obedience in whatever he may demand of her where she herself is concerned, as long as no sin is involved. We find many traditions emphasising the husband's right over his wife,"[506]

Ath-Thaqafah said, "It is compulsory for the wife to make herself available for her husband whenever he desires intimacy or penetration. If she abstains from him, she is considered to be recalcitrant. Likewise if she withholds herself from intimacy with her husband without actual penetration. A woman not making herself available for her husband's sexual needs is committing an enormity that is not atoned for except by obeying her husband and gaining his pleasure."[507]

Muḥammad al-Kawtharī added, "If the wife is menstruating or has postnatal bleeding, she is ill, physically unable to have sex, exhausted, emotionally drained or sexual activity is detrimental to her well-being, then she is no longer obligated to comply with her husband's demands for sex. Rather, the husband is required to show her sympathy by understanding that she may be unable to have sex. But simply 'not feeling up to it' [or not 'in the mood'] is not a justified reason."[508]

The Wife's God-Given Right to Intercourse

The Prophet ﷺ advocated women's right to sexual fulfilment and commanded men to fulfil their wives' sexual desires. In a famous *ḥadīth*, he ﷺ said to ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, "ʿAbdullāh! Have I not been formed that you fast all the day and stand in prayer all night?" I [ʿAbdullāh] said, "Yes, Messenger of Allah!" He said, "Do not do that! Observe the fast sometimes and leave it at other times; stand up for prayer at night and sleep at night. Your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you and your wife has a right over you."[509]

Abū Juhayfah narrated, "The Prophet established a bond of brotherhood between Salmān and Abū ad-Dardā'. Salmān paid a visit to Abū ad-Dardā' and found [his wife] Umm ad-Dardā' dressed in shabby clothes and asked her why she was in that state. She replied, 'Your brother Abū ad-Dardā' is not interested in [the pleasures of] this world.' Later on Abū ad-Dardā' came and prepared a meal for Salmān and said to him, 'Eat, for I am fasting.' Salmān replied, 'I am not going to eat unless you eat.' So, Abū ad-Dardā' ate [with Salmān]. When it was night and [a part of the night passed], Abū ad-Dardā' got up (to offer the night prayer), but Salmān told him to sleep, and Abū ad-Dardā' slept. After some time, Abū ad-Dardā' again got up, but Salmān told him to sleep. When it was the last hours of the night, Salmān told him to get up and both of them stood in prayer. Salmān told Abū ad-Dardā', 'Your Lord has a right over you, your soul has a right over you, and your family has a right over you; so you should fulfil the rights of all those who have a right over you.' Later on Abū ad-Dardā' visited the Prophet ﷺ and informed him of what happened. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Salmān has spoken the truth!"[510]

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[505] Khattab, 2005, p. 42

[506] See al-Ghazālī's *The Revival of the Sciences of the Dīn*

[507] Ath-Thaqafah, vol. 3, p. 592

[508] Al-Kawtharī, 2008, p.15

[509] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5199

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, related in the History of the Caliphs (*Tārikh al-khulafā*): A woman came to ʿUmar and said, "My husband stands at night [in prayer] and fasts during the day." ʿUmar said, "You have praised your husband excellently well." Ka ʿb ibn Sawwar said to ʿUmar, "She is [actually] complaining." ʿUmar said, "How?" He said, "She claims to have no share in marriage from her husband [meaning her husband is not having sexual intercourse with her]." ʿUmar said, "If you understand this much, then you decide between them." He (Kaʿb) said, "Leader of the Believers! Allah has permitted him four wives. So she has one day of every four days, and one night of every four nights."[511]

In light of this, al-Ghazālī gave an edict saying, "The husband should go to his wife [a minimum of] once every four nights. This is fairest because a Muslim man can marry up to four women. It is best that the husband should increase or decrease the amount of intercourse in accordance with his wife's need to guard her virtue, since the preservation of her virtue is a duty of the husband."[512]

Most jurists disagree with this opinion and say that a husband must have sexual relations with his wife every now and then without there being a fixed time-limit. As such, the husband must fulfil his wife's sexual desires as and when needed in order to maintain her outward and inward chastity and so that she does not incline towards committing an unlawful act.[513] Egyptian sexologist Dr. Heba Kotb advises men, "You have to have foreplay with your wife and you have to have sex with her frequently, not just when you want to."[514]

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[510] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-adab*, 6139

[511] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, *Tārikh al-khulafā'*, p. 161

[512] Al-Ghazālī

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[513] Al-Kawtharī, 2008, p. 21

[514] Raman, *'Egypt's Dr. Ruth': Let's talk sex in the Arab world*, 2007

CHAPTER 6

Infidelity (*fawāḥish*)

"Say: 'My Lord has forbidden indecency, both open and hidden'."[515]

INFIDELITY, SEXUAL SPEAKING, is the action or state of being unfaithful to a spouse or other sexual partner, as defined by the *Oxford Dictionary*.[516] The word originates from the Latin word *infidelis*, which means to be unfaithful and disloyal. In the Arabic language, Ibn Manẓūr said, "*Fawāḥish* is the plural of *fāḥishah* – indecency, meaning something detestable (*qabīḥ*, literally 'ugly') in speech or action."[517] From an Islamic perspective, infidelity has a broader meaning than its linguistic connotation. A person who commits fornication or adultery is not only being unfaithful to their spouse but to their Creator, by not being loyal to Him and steadfastly adhering to His commands and prohibitions.

The human body and soul are closely interlinked. Any sexual activity outside the parameters ordained by Allah will damage the soul grossly rather than uplifting and purifying it. Infidelity not only weakens the institution of marriage, which is a cornerstone of a stable and caring society, but it also facilitates the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, a threat apparently lifted with the advent of antibiotics which today looms again ominously with the increasing resistance STDs evince to these drugs.[518]

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[515] Al-Aʿrāf 7: 33

[516] Oxford Dictionary

[517] Ibn Manẓūr, 2003, vol. 7. p. 32

[518] Winter, T.J., 2002, p. 40

Fornication and Adultery (*zinā*)

In the Qur'ān Allah speaks in scathing terms about sex outside lawful bounds, "*And do not go near to fornication (zinā). It is an indecent act (fāḥishah), an evil way.*"[519]

Al-Qurṭubī said: "Scholars said that the [Qur'ānic] passage '*And do not go near to fornication (zinā)*' is more far reaching than merely saying 'Do not commit fornication (*zinā*),' because the meaning, '*And do not go near to fornication (zinā),*' refers to not doing any deed that may come close to fornication or lead to it, such as being alone with a member of the opposite sex, touching, looking, speaking with lust and so on."[520]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Every child of Adam has been decreed a portion of fornication that he will attain without doubt. The fornication of the eye is the look. The fornication of the ears is listening. The fornication of the tongue is speech. The fornication of the hand is the touch. The fornication of the feet is walking. The heart yearns and desires, which the private parts may or may not put into effect."[521]

The aforementioned *hadith* is not meant to be understood as an excuse for people to fornicate nor should it be understood as a means of justification for why fornication occurs, because it is part of the will of Allah. This type of thinking is wrong and is not in keeping with the understanding of the early community of Muslims, who believed that every sane adult has free will and will be held accountable for their own actions.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Never does [sexual] immorality appear openly among a people, without agonies and plagues, that were unknown to their ancestors, appearing among them."[522]

He also ﷺ said, "Whenever the prevalence of fornication and usury (*ribā*) appear in an area, the people cause the punishment of Allah to descend on them."[523]

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[519] Al-Isrā' 17: 32

[520] Al-Qurṭubī. Where fornication is used in this book, it refers to *zinā* which refers both to the fornication of unmarried people and the adultery of married people or those who have been married at some point.

[521] Muslim, *Kitāb al-qadr*, 2657

[522] Winter, T.J. 2002, p. 40

[523] Al-Ḥākim

DOES COMMITTING FORNICATION TAKE A MUSLIM OUTSIDE THE FOLD OF ISLAM?

A cardinal principle in Islam is that people are not excluded from the faith on the basis of major behavioural indiscretions whether they be consumption of alcohol, dealing with usury or illicit sexual conduct. This does not mean Islam accepts such practices to be a part of the legitimate lifestyle of Muslims. Rather it is incumbent upon believers in Allah and His Messenger ﷺ to abstain from such prohibited acts to the best of their abilities, seeking the aid of Allah the Exalted in that.

Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī related that ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit said, "We were with the Prophet ﷺ in a gathering and he said, 'Pledge allegiance to me on the basis that you will not associate anything with Allah, will not steal, and will not commit fornication (*zinā*)' – then he recited the rest of the [Qur'ānic] *āyat*[524] – 'If any of you fulfils it, his reward is due from Allah. If anyone does something of that and is punished for it, that is its expiation. If someone does something of that, and Allah veils him, then if Allah wishes, He will forgive him and if He wishes, He will punish him.'"[525]

CAN A TRUE BELIEVER COMMIT FORNICATION?

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "When a fornicator is engaged in the act of fornication he is not a believer."[526]

He also ﷺ said, "When a man fornicates, his faith leaves him and hovers above him like a cloud. When he ceases [committing fornication], his faith returns to him."[527]

Ibn Rajab said, "People of knowledge have differed about perpetrators of major wrong actions as to whether they are called believers (*mu'minūn*) with shortcomings in their faith or as to whether they are not called believers but rather Muslims."[528]

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[524] "*O Prophet! When women who believe come to you pledging allegiance to you on the grounds that they will not associate anything with Allah or steal or fornicate or kill their children or give a false ascription of paternity – making up lies about their bodies – or disobey you in respect of anything right, then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*" Sūrat al-Mumtaḥanah 60:12. The *āyat* concerns what is called 'the pledge of allegiance of women' that does not involve fighting, but which was the original *bayʿah* for men at the first meeting at ʿAqabah before the Hijrah at which ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit was present. At the second meeting, the *bayʿah* for men involved the duty to fight *jihād*.

[525] Al-Bukhārī

[526] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

[527] Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī

[528] Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, p. 191

Although there is a difference of opinion as to whether such a fornicator is a believer or not, there is no difference that they are Muslims. Some scholars are of the opinion that every believer is a Muslim but not every Muslim is necessarily a believer, as a Muslim is someone who outwardly adheres to Islam, whereas a believer inwardly adheres to *īmān* i.e. he has faith. Since only Allah knows what is in the hearts of human beings, only He is able to know which of the Muslims are true believers and which are hypocrites.

CAN A FORNICATOR LOVE ALLAH AND THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH?

A person who commits a major wrong action, such as fornication or drinking alcohol, may still have the love of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ in their heart, as the following tradition makes clear, "Aslam related from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ that in the time of the Prophet ﷺ there was a man named ʿAbdullāh who was nicknamed 'the donkey' and who used to make the Messenger of Allah ﷺ laugh. The Prophet ﷺ flogged him for drinking [alcohol]. One day he was brought and he commanded that he be lashed [again for drinking alcohol]. A man among the people said, 'O Allah, curse him! How often he is brought on account of it!' The Prophet said, 'Do not curse him. By Allah, I only know that he loves Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.'"[529]

The *ḥadīth* shows the compassion and mercy of the Prophet ﷺ, because he told his Companions not to curse their brother in faith for his indiscretion. Every person has his or her own struggles, but still may have the love of Allah in their hearts.

DO PREMARITAL RELATIONS AFFECT MARITAL LIFE?

Women who have numerous premarital relationships are less likely to have happy marriages than men, whose happiness in marriage is not affected by premarital relationships, a study published by the National Marriage Project concluded. The findings were published by the University of Virginia in a report entitled, "Before 'I Do': What do premarital experiences have to do with marital quality among today's young adults?" The report, co-authored by psychologists Galena K. Rhoades and Scott M. Stanley, explores the relationship between premarital experiences and the quality of marital experience among young adults. According to the report, prior relationship experiences and their consequences are linked to the subsequent quality of marital relationships. The researchers found that more than half of married women who had only ever slept with their future husbands felt highly satisfied in their marriage. However this percentage dropped significantly for women who had multiple premarital sexual partners. The study also found out that the number of premarital sexual partners men have did not have a bearing on how satisfied they felt within marriage. Researchers said the study showed that sex with many different partners 'may be risky' if the woman is in search of a high-quality marriage. The reason for this may be because women who have had many sexual partners find it difficult to commit to their husbands once they are aware of alternatives. It also may be because a number of failed relationships can give women a 'more jaundiced view of love', and that can affect future relationships and ultimately their marriage.[530]

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[529] Al-Bukhārī

Sodomy and Homosexuality (*liwāt*)

In the Qur'ān, Allah refers to sodomy as a depravity (*fāḥishah*), and it is equally condemned in various *ḥadīth*s. In his translation of the classic Sunni manual of Islamic Sacred Law, *Reliance of the Traveller*,[531] Nuh Ha Mim Keller said, "In more than one place in the Qur'ān, Allah recounts to us the story of [Prophet Lūṭ] Lot's people, and how He destroyed them for their wicked practice [of sodomy]. There is consensus among Muslims and the followers of all other religions that sodomy is an enormity. It is even viler and uglier than adultery."

In the Qur'ān, Allah cites Lūṭ ﷷ as saying, "*You come with lust to men instead of women. You are indeed a depraved people.*"[532]

In another *āyat* Allah cites him ﷷ as saying, "*Of all beings, do you lie with males, leaving the wives Allah has created for you? You are a people who have overstepped the limits.*"[533]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah will not look at a man who enters another man or woman in the anus."[534]

And he ﷺ said, "Cursed is he who commits the act of the people of Lūṭ! Cursed is he who commits the act of the people of Lūṭ! Cursed is he who commits the act of the people of Lūṭ!"[535]

And, "Lesbianism by women is adultery between them."[536]

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[530] See Galena K. Rhoades and Scott, M. Stanley, 2014, *Before "I Do": What Do Premarital Experiences Have to Do with Marital Quality Among Today's Young Adults?,*

[531] Ibn Naqib al-Misri (translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller), 2008, p. 664

[532] Al-Aʿrāf 7: 80-81

[533] Ash-Shuʿarā' 26: 165-166

[534] At-Tirmidhī

[535] Aṭ-Ṭabarānī; *at-Targhīb wa at-tarhīb*

[536] Aṭ-Ṭabarānī

Several *āyats* of the Qur'ān mention sexual relations between men in the context of the people of the Prophet Lot (Lūṭ) ﵇, which gave rise to the word *liwāṭ* (to attach oneself, to join oneself to), with the active male sodomite being known in classical Arabic as *lūṭī, lā'iṭ, or mulāwiṭ*.[537] Though *liwāṭ* is often equated with 'homosexuality' in its contemporary Western usage, it is important to understand that the modern concept has no equivalent in traditional Islam.[538] Same-sex practices, defined as sodomy in antiquity, had later been redefined as homosexuality by the end of the nineteenth century and then as gay identity by the end of the twentieth century. In her book *The End of Sexual Identity*, anthropologist Jenell Williams Paris documents how clinical psychotherapist George Weinberg was instrumental in shifting public perception of homosexuality in the West. In the mid-1960s, Weinberg challenged the conventional notion at the time that homosexuality was a psychological disorder, a definition that was repealed in 1973 by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).[539] Later on, Weinberg coined the term 'homophobia' to propose the idea that those who have a 'fear' of or aversion towards homosexuality are suffering from a psychological disorder. 'Homophobia' has since become a tool used to castigate people who disapprove of same-sex relations, whether or not such disapproval is based upon religious beliefs.

Despite that fact that much of the secular Western world has accepted homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle, many Arab and African countries have vehemently opposed same-sex relations and enacted laws to criminalise those who practice and promote such relations. African countries such as Zimbabwe,[540] Nigeria, Gambia, and Uganda have gained global attention in recent years for their strong stance against the western world's homosexual agenda in Africa.[541] A committed Muslim, President Yahya Jammeh of the republic of Gambia. said homosexuals were "vermins" and said that homosexuality was "detrimental to human existence. It is unafrican, unethical and ungodly!"[542]

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[537] Newman, 2014, p. 44

[538] Newman, 2014, p. 44

[539] Homosexuality was originally classified as a psychological disorder by the American Psychiatric Association, but the definition was repealed in 1973.

[540] Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe said that his country will never accept homosexuality, and that gay people are "worse than pigs." Homosexuality is seen as an aversion to God according to Mugabe, "We don't accept homosexuality here, God made men and women so they can bear children."

[541] The 'homosexual agenda' also referred to as the 'gay agenda' is a term used to describe the advocacy of cultural acceptance and normalisation of same-sex relationships. The term refers to efforts to change government policies and laws on homosexuality and the alleged goals of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) rights activists.

Similar statements have been made by other leading African politicians who have described homosexuality as against their religious and cultural traditions. Despite many polls showing that the majority of Africans, both Christians and Muslims, are not in favour of homosexuality, the anti-gay laws in Africa have drawn heavy criticism from secular Western (European and American) governments which have threatened to cut aid to those African states that pass laws against homosexuality. In defiance, Jammeh said when asked what he feels about those in the West who say that Africans should legalise homosexuality:

> "We are Muslims and we believe in the Almighty Allah, and what He says. Whatever Allah says is haram, will make sure that is is haram to the letter. I don't care what they feel about me." Jammeh continues, "And let me also make it very clear, even if the whole world accept it. I, Yahya Jammeh will not accept it in the Gambia! Let them go and tell me whatever they want to tell me. Do I care? I don't. What I care about is how Almighty Allah sees me. I am a Muslim. If I die none of them can take take me to hell or heaven, but it is the Almighty Allah that can take me to wherever he decides. And homosexuality will never be accepted in this country."[543]

THE CONCEPT OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In the last century in the Western world, the notion was developed of people having different sexual orientations after some sexologists and psychotherapists claimed that people are born biologically with a particular sexual orientation. The Kinsey Report was instrumental in advocating this idea. The report created a seven-category system for sexual orientation, and asserted that sexuality is prone to change over time.

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[542] In January 2011 the Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan signed a bill that criminalises same-sex relations. The bill drew a lot of criticism from western countries such as the United States who tried to put pressure on the Nigerian government to not pass the anti-gay law. In February 2014, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni also signed a controversial bill that punishes homosexual sex with up to life in prison. The bill received media attention in the Western world and when interviewed by the international television channel, CNN, Museveni urged the West to "respect African societies and their values." He said that there was no scientific proof that people were born homosexual and said that sexual behaviour is a matter of choice. He also described homosexuals as "disgusting" which sparked uproar amongst many western media outlets.

[543] Interview with Henry Bonsu of PressTV

According to Dr. Judith Reisman and many others, Kinsey's methodology was flawed with bias and subjective sampling that were used to draw conclusions proposing the idea that homosexuality is inherent in individuals.

CAN A MUSLIM BE HOMOSEXUAL?

Same-sex relations have existed amongst Muslims since the era of the early generations of Muslims. Abū Saʿīd al-Ṣuʿlūkī said, "There will be some people who will be called sodomites in this community (*ummah*). They are of three kinds: some who just gaze, others who just shake hands, and the last who commit the abominable act [of sodomy]."[544]

A Muslim who has desires for people of the same sex should not act upon them as it would constitute a major wrong action.[545] Whether an individual who may have homosexual tendencies or has engaged in same-sex relations is actually a 'homosexual,' depends on how one defines homosexuality. The modern definition assumes it is an actual biological condition whereas traditionally it was regarded as a type of behaviour. Pre-modern society did not have the concept of 'homosexuality' as it is understood today. Like race, homosexuality is a social construct that was coined by psychologists in the nineteenth century.[546] In pre-modern society, the idea of people being born 'homosexual' was non-existent; men who engaged in acts of sodomy were known as sodomites because of their actions not their 'sexual identity' or 'sexual orientation'. French philosopher Michael Foucault stressed in *The History of Sexuality* that the term 'sodomite' applies to the perpetrator of an act; someone who is tempted to commit sodomy but refrains out of moral or religious considerations is thus not a sodomite. By contrast, the modern concept of a 'homosexual' includes a male who has the inclination to commit sodomy with another male, even if it is not translated into action.[547] There was little or no discussion amongst classical erotologists about whether sexual orientation is biologically determined or a choice. The relationship between biology and sexual orientation still remains a topic for serious scientific research. There is no irrefutable scientific evidence, however, that proves sexual orientation is biological.

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[544] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr;* Al-Ghazālī, 1995, p. 176

[545] Muslims who live in countries where homosexuality has been legalised are not permitted to take the law into their own hands. That means, among things, that they may not undertake to punish homosexuals under the pretence that they are adhering to the Sacred Law.

[546] Paris, 2011, pp. 8-9

[547] El-Rouayheb, 2005, p. 5

WAS HOMOSEXUALITY TOLERATED IN TRADITIONAL MUSLIM SOCIETY?

In traditional pre-modern Muslim cultures, particularly in the Middle East, same-sex relations appear to have been tolerated by some segments of the Muslim community. Although the practice is prohibited in the Sacred Law, Muslim erotologists often made use of scholarly discussions in satirical treatises on sexual pleasure to address the issue of same-sex relations. Making use of a scholarly discussion of the relation of sexual pleasure to popular obscenity, erotologists such as al-Jāḥiẓ debated the merits of men having sex with boys relative to men having sex with women. These highly entertaining satirical essays featured prominently in classical erotology literature and were explicitly charged with humorous and moral undertones. Although both forms of sexual practice are prohibited in the Sacred Law, the fornicator would argue that women are far superior to boys as sexual partners from both a religious and biological standpoint, citing the fact that in the Qur'ān Allah speaks about women in the Garden, the Prophets Muḥammad, Dāwūd and Yūsuf, peace be upon them, were captivated by women and many righteous men were enamoured of women. The fornicator would defiantly argue, "I would rather be a womaniser, than a sodomiser!"

Masturbation (*istimnā*)

Masturbation is the stimulation of the genitals with the hand for sexual pleasure and ejaculation.

Allah, exalted is He, says, "*those who guard their private parts except from their wives or those they own as slaves, in which case they are not blameworthy; but those who desire anything more than that are people who have gone beyond the limits.*"[548]

Al-Baghawī says, "This [*āyat*] is evidence that masturbation (*'istimnā bī al-yad)* is forbidden. This is the opinion of the majority of jurists."[549] Imam Mālik also based his judgement on the prohibition of masturbation on the aforementioned verse, arguing that the masturbator is one of the "people who have gone beyond the limits."[550].

Some jurists, such as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, have permitted masturbation for someone who fears committing fornication as it is the 'lessor of two evils.'

Al-Ghazālī related that one day, after the people had left a gathering

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548 Al-Mu'minūn 23: 5-7

549 Al-Baghawī, 2002, p. 878

550 Al-Qaraḍāwī, 2003, p. 154

at Ibn Abbās' place, a young man stayed behind, "Is there anything you need?" asked Ibn Abbās. "Yes," said the young man, "I wanted to ask you a question, but I was ashamed to do so in front of the people, and now I am afraid in front of the people, and now I am afraid and in awe of you." Ibn Abbās then said, "A scholar stands in *loco parentis*, so tell me whatever you would tell your own father."

The youth explained, "I am a young man without a wife. Fearing that I might otherwise commit fornication, I sometimes masturbate. Is that a sin?" Ibn Abbās turned away from him, then said, "Ugh! Marriage to a slave-girl would be better than that, although it is preferable to fornication or adultery." Al-Ghazālī said, "This indicates that the lustful bachelor is tossed among three evils: the least of them is marriage to a slave-girl, masturbation is worse, but the most heinous of all is adultery or fornication."[551]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said, "Physicians have said that causing seminal emission by the hand causes distress and weakens the sexual appetite and erections of the penis. As well as this, it is forbidden by the Sacred Law."[552]

Regarding the issue of masturbation, Ibn Falita explained, some men prefer it to sexual intercourse, although the majority of the Muslim jurists disapprove of the act, Ibn Falita quoted a saying which was attributed to the Prophet ﷺ, "On the Day of Judgement, a masturbator will be brought back to life with his hand pregnant." The tradition is of dubious provenance and most likely to have been fabricated to discourage people from the act of self-pleasure. In saying that Ibn Falita did point out that some people considered masturbation as cleaner than fornication and less trouble than either pederasty or unwanted children. Even women masturbate, Ibn Falta added, when men are not available or not sufficiently satisfying; some women are also reported to have used a dildo "which they do not want to declare, because they feel ashamed to do so," As a poet Ibn Falita supplemented his discussion with a selection of poetry:

When young men turned to sodomy
And women to lesbianism,
I lay in my bed alone.
When my penis cried for intercourse
And looked like a muezzin
Searching for the moon in the sky,
I moistened my palm with saliva
And began to masturbate with indifference

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[551] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, pp. 25-26

[552] As-Suyuti (translated by Ahmad Thomson), 2009, p. 21

Pornography

Pornography and masturbation are almost invariably linked. Pornography promotes solitary self-stimulation and that is the antithesis of the mutual intimacy of two people with each other. Pornography itself has changed radically during the past half century. People were previously ashamed of, or, at the very least, embarrassed by the prospect of being caught looking at porn. Today, pornography is seamlessly integrated into popular culture.[553] The pornification of modern day culture has desensitised society sexually and changed people's attitudes towards sexuality. The Internet has expanded the reach of pornography and has made it easily accessible. One quarter of daily search-engine requests on the Internet are reportedly for pornographic material. It is a global epidemic that is affecting both religious and irreligious communities. According to Christian psychologist Dr. James Dobson, porn addiction is responsible for many broken marriages and failed relationships. Studies have shown that men who regularly view pornography can experience some difficulties in becoming aroused by ordinary sexual activity with women. A porn addict cited in Pamela Paul's book about the harmful effects of pornography said, "Porn messes with the way you think of women... You want the women you are with to be like the women in porn. I was scared to get involved in a relationship. I did not know how extensive the damage was."[554]

Academics Dolf Zillman and Bryant concluded in their study of the effect of pornography that constant exposure to sexual images can have a negative impact on a person's ability to be intimate. In contrast, modesty in public can lead to longer and more fulfilling sexual relationships. Pamela Paul argues, that the constant exposure of sexual imagery and lack of modesty in popular culture has caused a crisis in intimate relationships.

Neuroscientific research has shown that pornography can have a detrimental effect on sexual relationships. It can cause desensitisation and sexual dysfunction such as impotence and delayed ejaculation. In a world where stimulation is valued over authenticity, illusion over reality and escapism over actuality, it is quite disturbing that people prefer virtual sex to real relationships and actual penetration.[555]

Pamela Paul reported that a man who used to regularly watch porn and frequently visit strip-clubs said, "It seemed kind of pathetic from both ends of the spectrum – for both the men and the women. There's this whole charade where the guys are trying to pretend to themselves that the women are really interested in them and that they're not just paid to act that way, and the women are trying to pretend that the men don't disgust them. There's something incredibly lonely and sad about it."[556]

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[553] Paul, 2005, p. 4

[554] Hedges, 2009, p. 57

[555] Hedges, 2009, p. 61

As modern science has shown, pornography can have damaging effects on the physical and psychological welfare of the voyeur.[557] One could deduce from the Qur'ān that it protects against the harmful effects of voyeurism in the aptly named Sūrah, 'Light', *"Say to the believers that they should lower their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them."*[558] Because the *āyat* warns against much slighter matters than gazing at pornography, it prevents sliding down the slippery slope for those who heed it.

Advice from the Qur'an and Sunnah for Fornicators and Adulterers

By their nature, human beings are prone to err and commit wrong actions; there is, however, a recourse in Islam. The Sacred Law offers practical advice and guidance for fornicators and adulterers:

CONCEALMENT OF WRONGDOING AND MISTAKES

Allah says in His Noble Book, "*People who love to see filth being spread about concerning those who believe will have a painful punishment both in this world and the Next World. Allah knows and you do not know.*"[559]

What happens in privacy and in the dark should not be brought to light. It is recommended that a person who has committed an illicit sexual act should conceal his or her misdeed, as is evident from the following *ḥadīth*s: "People! It is time for you to refrain from transgressing Allah's limits. He who commits one of these filthy acts [i.e. fornication], let him hide under Allah's cover, for whoever admits what he has committed, we will establish Allah's Book as regards to him [by applying the penal punishment]."[560]

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[556] Paul, 2005, p. 19

[557] A voyeur is a person who gains sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity. Oxford Dictionary

[558] An-Nūr 24: 30

[559] An-Nūr 24: 19

[560] Aḥmad

And he ﷺ said, "My entire community is safe, except those who boast of their sins (*mujāhirīn*). Among them is a man who commits an act [like fornication], and wakes up in the morning while Allah has concealed his wrongdoing. The man [then] says: 'O so and so! Last night I did this and that.' He spent the night with Allah veiling his wrongdoing, but wakes up in the morning revealing the wrongdoing that Allah had veiled." [561]

ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd related, "A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: "Messenger of Allah! I mingled with a woman on the far side of Madinah, and fulfilled my desire short of actually having sexual intercourse with her. So here I am; pass judgement on me according to what you decide." ʿUmar said, "Allah kept your secret, why did you not keep your secret?"[562]

REPENTANCE

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "All the children of Adam do wrong, but the best of those who do wrong are those who repent!" [563]

And he ﷺ said, "Allah is more pleased with the repentance of his slave than of a person who lost his animal with his food and drink whilst crossing the desert. The man became so despondent and resorted to the shade of a tree and slept. When he awoke, he found his animal standing beside him. Then he took its bridle and said, 'O Allah! You are my slave and I am your Lord!' He said this in error out of excessive joy."[564]

And he ﷺ said, "Fear Allah wherever you may be; follow up an evil deed with a good one which will wipe [the former] out."[565]

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[561] Al-Bukhārī

[562] Muslim. The penal punishments are a mercy from Allah and act as a deterrent to prevent sexual indecencies in society and catastrophic breaks in the lineage of offspring. However neither the Qur'ān nor the Sunnah encourage people to catch perpetuators in the act of *zinā*. Muslim jurists state that, in order to implement the legal penalties for fornication/adultery, only four upright individuals' testimony that they had witnessed the act of penetration would be is acceptable in an Islamic court of law. Otherwise, as Allah says in the Qur'ān, they should keep silent or else they would be considered by Allah Almighty to be liars and their testimony disregarded. "*But those who make accusations against chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses: flog them with eighty lashes and never again accept them as witnesses. Such people are deviators...*" An-Nūr 24:4

[563] Aḥmad

[564] Muslim

[565] At-Tirmidhī relates it, saying: "It is a good (*ḥasan*) *ḥadīth*." In some copies he says: "It is a good and genuine (*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*) *ḥadīth*."

And, "Allah accepts the repentance of everyone as long as he is not facing the agony of death."[566]

ʿImrān ibn Huṣayn reported, "A woman from Juhaynah came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; she had become pregnant because of adultery. She said, 'Messenger of Allah, I have done something for which [the prescribed punishment (*hadd*)] must be imposed upon me, so impose it.' The Messenger of Allah ﷺ called her master and said: "Treat her well, and when she delivers [her child], bring her to me." He did so accordingly. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ pronounced judgment on her, and her clothes were tied around her. He commanded her to be stoned to death, then prayed over her. ʿUmar said to the Prophet ﷺ, 'Messenger of Allah, you offer prayer for her when she has committed adultery!' The Prophet ﷺ said, "She has made such a repentance that if it were to be divided between seventy men of Madinah, it would be enough. Have you found any repentance better than that she sacrificed her life for Allah, the Majestic?"[567]

Al-Bukhārī narrated in *al-Adab al-mufrad* that Abū Dharr ﵁ said, "I came to the Prophet ﷺ while he was wearing white clothes and sleeping. I went back to him again, after he had risen from sleep. He said, 'There is no slave who says "There is no god but Allah" and then dies while believing in that, but that he will enter the Garden.' I said, 'Even if he had committed fornication and theft?' He replied, 'Even if he had committed fornication and theft.' I said [again]. 'Even if he had committed fornication and theft?' [Again] he replied, 'Even if he had committed fornication and theft.' And then he said, 'Even if he had committed fornication and theft, inspite of Abū Dharr's disapproval."[568]

FORGIVENESS

Allah addresses humanity in the Qur'ān, "*Say: 'My slaves, you who have transgressed against yourselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Truly Allah forgives all wrong actions. He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.'*"[569]

In another *āyat*, Allah says, "*To whomever avoids the major wrong actions and indecencies – except for minor lapses – truly your Lord is vast in forgiveness. He has most knowledge of you when He first produced you from the earth, and when you were embryos in your mothers' wombs. So do not claim purity for your-*

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[566] At-Tirmidhī

[567] Muslim

[568] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-mufrad,* no. 803; al-Bukhārī, *ar-Riqāq, bāb hadhā al-māl khaḍrah ḥulwah,,* no. 6443 and 6444; al-Ghazālī, 2013, pp. 259-260

[569] Az-Zumar 39: 53

selves. He knows best those who are godfearing."[570] 'Godfearing' i.e. they have *taqwā*.

Allah has exempted minor lapses (*lamam*) from His punishment. Linguistically, the word *lamam* means something minor and petty or it is used for a small quantity of something. In this context, the word is used in the sense that a person did not commit fornication (*zinā*) but was very close to committing it. Asked to interpret the *āyat*, the Companion of the Prophet ﷺ ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās cited the example of a man who approached a woman with the intention of seducing her: if he proceeds to sexual intercourse, it will be considered fornication, but if he holds back, the act is considered a minor lapse (*lamam*). Another Companion reckoned that kissing and touching are minor lapses (*lamam*), and others maintained that minor lapses are acts of intimacy stopping short of actual penetration.[571] Indeed, in the well known *ḥadīth* of the rewards and punishments for actions, the Prophet ﷺ actually cites Allah as rewarding people for wrong actions that they intend to do but do not commit.[572]

Regarding the words of Allah, "*So do not claim purity for yourselves. He knows best those who are godfearing.*"[573] The dean of Qur'ānic exegesis, aṭ-Ṭabarī says, "Allah the Mighty says, 'do not bear witness for yourselves that you are righteous, pure, free of wrongdoing and disobedience' as was narrated to us by Zayd ibn Aslam, who said concerning the *āyat*, 'Allah, exalted is He, is saying, "Your Lord, Muḥammad, knows those from amongst His slaves who fear His punishment and therefore avoid wrongdoing".'"[574]

Allah says in His Noble Book, "*...those who, when they act indecently or wrong themselves, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their bad actions (and who can forgive bad actions except Allah?) and do not knowingly persist in what they were doing. Their recompense is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, for ever. How excellent is the reward of those who act!*"[575]

Speaking about the forgiveness of Allah, the Prophet ﷺ said, "I swear by Him in whose Hand is my self, if you were a people who did not commit wrong actions, Allah would do away with you and replace you with people who would commit wrong actions and then seek Allah's forgiveness so that He could forgive them."[576]

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[570] An-Najm 53: 32

[571] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p. 192

[572] "If he intends to do a wrong action then does not do it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a complete good action. If he intends to do it and then does it, Allah writes it down as a single wrong action." al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The *ḥadīth* is number 37 in the Forty *Hadith* of Imām an-Nawawi.

[573] An-Najm 53: 32

[574] See aṭ-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*

[575] Āl ʿImrān 3: 135-136

In another *ḥadīth* it is reported that he ﷺ said, "A prostitute saw a dog hanging around a well on a hot day, its tongue lolling out from thirst, so she drew some water in her shoe for it and Allah forgave her."[577]

Ibn ʿUmar said, "I heard the Prophet ﷺ narrating a *ḥadīth*, not just once or twice, or even seven times, but I heard him saying it more than that! I heard him say, 'Al-Kifl from the Children of Israel did not scruple to do any wrongdoing. A woman came to him and he gave her sixty dinars so that he could have sexual intercourse with her. When he sat with her in the way that a man sits with a woman, she began to tremble and cry, so he said, "Why are you crying, did I force you?" She said, "No. But it is a deed I have never done before, and only need drove me to it." He said, "You do this but haven't done it before. Leave me, and it [i.e. the money] is yours." And then he said, "By Allah! I will never disobey Allah after this!" He died during the night and when morning came "Indeed Allah has forgiven al-Kifl" was written upon his door."[578]

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[576] Muslim

[577] Muslim

[578] At-Tirmidhī

CHAPTER 7

Pleasures of the Garden (*jannah*)

"The Companions of the Garden are busy enjoying themselves today, they and their wives reclining on couches in the shade."[579]

THE GARDEN[580] IS the abode of vast pleasure and delight with which Allah will reward His obedient slaves by His infinite mercy.[581] Amongst the pleasures of the Garden that the sacred sources describe vividly are the pleasures of sexual relations which the believers will enjoy. The Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* speak of the pleasures of the Garden in detail, and these act as great incentives to performing good deeds and remaining steadfast on the path of Allah.

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[579] Yā Sīn 36: 55-56

[580] There are several levels in the Garden, the highest level called *firdaws* (Paradise)

[581] The Prophet ﷺ said, "None of you will be saved by his deeds." They (the Companions) asked, "Not even you, Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Not even me, unless Allah enfolds me in His mercy." al-Bukhārī, 6463. In *Lisān al-ʿArab* the meaning of the phrase "enfolds me" gives the sense of "envelopment, engulfment, covering and immersing." In another version, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately and know that your deeds will not make you enter the Garden, and that the most beloved deed to Allah is the most constant even if it be small." al-Bukhārī, 6464. And in another *ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ was asked, "What deeds are most beloved to Allah?" He said, "The most constant even though they be small." He added, "Only take upon yourselves the deeds which are within your capacity." al-Bukhārī, 6465

Houris

Allah says, "*We will marry them to dark-eyed maidens (houris).*"[582]

The houris are nubile, alabaster-skinned, dark-eyed women created by Allah for the male believers in the Garden. The Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* make mention of beautiful virgin houris. Created from saffron, the houris are described in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* as having intensely black irises and white scleras. Fair in complexion with long jet-black hair, they have swelling breasts like pomegranates and possess melodious singing voices. Their skin is delicate and as diaphanous as the inner membrane of an egg, and their faces are so beautiful that if a houri were to remove her veil the sun would pale in comparison.[583] The houris are free of all impurities such as menstruation, urine, excreta, and saliva as well as being free from character flaws such as jealousy, malice, hypocrisy and vulgar speech. In the follow passage, we cite some of what has been related about the houris in the sacred texts:

> "A houri is an extremely beautiful young woman with a transparent body. The marrow of her bones is visible like the interior lines of pearls and rubies. She looks like red wine in a white glass. She is white, and free from routine physical disabilities of ordinary women such as menstruation, menopause, urinal and excretion, child-bearing and the related pollution. The houris are women of tender age, having large round breasts but not inclined to dangle. Houris dwell in palaces of splendid surroundings."[584]

Anas related that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "A single morning or evening in the path of Allah[585] is better than the world and all it contains. An area in the Garden half a bow's length around, or the space one's foot occupies in it is better than the world and all it contains. Were but one of the wives of the people of the Garden to look out upon the earth, she would illuminate it entirely and fill whatever is between [heaven and earth] with perfume. The covering (*naṣīf*) on her head – meaning her scarf (*khimār*) – is better than the world and all it contains."[586]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "When one comes to behold her face in her tent it is purer than a mirror. The smallest pearl upon her would light up all that is between East and West. She will be dressed in seventy garments through which his gaze passes until he espies the marrow of her leg underneath."[587]

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[582] Ad-Dukhān 44: 54

[583] "*There will be dark-eyed maidens with them, with eyes reserved for them alone, just like closely guarded pearls.*" Al-Ṣāffāt 37: 48-49

[584] At-Tirmidhī

[585] i.e. participating in military expeditions (*ghazwah*)

[586] Al-Bukhārī; Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 244

And "When I was taken on the Night Journey I entered Heaven at a place called Bīukh, where there were tents of pearls, sapphires and green chrysolite. And it was said, 'Peace be upon you, Messenger of Allah!' 'Jibrīl,' I asked, 'What was that call?' 'It came from the *dark-eyed women, secluded in cool pavilions,*' [588] he replied, 'who asked leave of their Lord to greet you, which He granted.' And suddenly they began to say, 'We are the contented ones, and shall never be vexed. We are the eternal ones, and shall never pass away.'" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then recited the words of Allah, "*Dark-eyed, secluded in cool pavilions.*"[589]

Allah mentions, *"and purified wives."*[590] Commenting on this Qur'ānic *āyat*, Mujāhid said that it means that they are purified "of menstruation, excrement, mucus, semen and childbearing."[591]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "In the Garden there is a market in which there is neither purchase nor sale, but only forms of men and women. Anyone that desires a form may enter into it. And in the Garden there are a host of large-eyed houris, who raise their voices in a sound the like of which has never been heard by any creature, saying, 'We are the eternal ones, and will never pass away. We are the joyful ones, and will never grieve. We are the contented ones, and will never be vexed. Blessed, therefore, is he who will be ours, and for whom we will be.'"[592]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said, "The houris of the Garden will sing, 'We are the houris beautiful, kept hidden for honourable spouses.'"[593]

He ﷺ said, "At the head and feet of every man that enters the Garden there will sit a pair of the large-eyed houris who sing to him in the most beautiful voice ever heard by man or jinn; not the devil's piping, but only the praise and hallowing of Allah."[594]

Allah ﷻ described the houris, saying, *"untouched before them by either*

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[587] Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 244; at-Tirmidhī *Qiyāmah*, 60,;Ahmad, 2. 230

[588] Ar-Raḥmān 55:72

[589] Al-Bayhaqī, *Ba'th*, 215; Al-Ghazālī, 2013, pp. 244-245,

[590] Al-'Imrān 3: 15

[591] Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 245

[592] Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 246

[593] Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 246; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-awsaṭ*, Ibn Abī Shaybah, 13, 106

[594] Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 246, aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-awsaṭ*, al-Bayhaqī, *Ba'th*, 228

man or jinn."[595] The description of the houris as *"untouched"* alludes to their virginity. In another passage in the Qur'ān, He states, *"In them are houris with eyes for them alone, untouched before them by either man or jinn,"*[596] and also, *"And dark-eyed houris like hidden pearls,"*[597] and again, *"Like precious gems of ruby and pearl."*[598]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The first group of people to enter the Garden, will be formed like the form of the full moon and those who will follow them will be as radiant as the most brilliant star in the sky. They will not urinate, excrete, spit, or have any nasal secretions. Their combs will be of gold, and their sweat will smell like musk. Their fumigant will be aloes-wood – *alnajūj*, a fragrant scented wood. Their wives will be houris. All of them will be of the proportions of a single man, on the form of their father Adam, sixty cubits in the sky."[599]

Allah ﷻ said, *"We have brought maidens into being and made them purest virgins, devoted (ʿurub), passionate, of like age."* [600] Commenting on this *āyat*, ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān as-Sa'dī said, "*ʿUrub* refers to a wife who is loving towards her husband and speaks well to him, looks pleasing, and is beautiful and kind. She is one who, if she speaks, her speech causes infatuation and someone who hears her wishes that her words will never end, especially when she sings in her sweet voice; and if her husband looks at her courtesy, her appearance and sees her gentleness, she fill his heart with joy and happiness; and if she moves from one place to another, that place will be filled with a beautiful fragrance and light. That also includes flirting during intimacy. The passage *"of like age"* refers to women who are of the same age as their husbands, thirty-three years old, which is the peak of growth and the end of the years of youth. So their wives will be *"devoted to their husbands only, and of like age"*, living together with them in harmony, pleased and pleasing; they will not grieve or cause grief; rather they will be joyful and delightful."[601]

Scholars and laypersons alike are enchanted by the beauty and delightfulness of the houris. Yearning for their love, several scholars related stories of individuals seeing houris in their dreams prior to passing away, which was generally interpreted as glad tidings for them of the Garden.

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[595] Ar-Raḥmān 55: 74

[596] Ar-Raḥmān 55: 56

[597] Al-Wāqiʿah 56: 22-23

[598] Ar-Raḥmān 55: 58

[599] Al-Bukhārī

[600] Al-Wāqiʿah 56:35-37

[601] See 'Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sa'dī's *Taysīr al-Karīm ar-Raḥmān fi tafsīr kalām al-Mannān*

An example was related by the student of Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī, Aḥmad ibn Abī al-Ḥawārī who said, "I visited my shaykh and noticed he was very happy. He was alone but was smiling with a look of sheer joy and delight. I asked him, 'What happened to you my dear shaykh?' He said, 'I will inform you on condition that you tell no-one until after I pass away. I took a midday nap and saw a houri who was more beautiful than the sun and more radiant than the moon. She said to me, "Abū Sulaymān speak to me and sleep. I have been preparing myself for you in my boudoir for five hundred years."' Then Abū Sulaymān said [to the student], 'By Allah, I can still hear her sweet voice and words in my ears. I am waiting for this delight with the houri. She is a beautiful, humble, pleasing and noble lady. This is the reason for the joy that you see.'"[602]

THE WOMEN OF THIS WORLD ARE SUPERIOR TO THE HOURIS

Abū Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Every man in the Garden will go to seventy-two of the creatures of Allah [houris] and two mortal women. These two women are superior to the creatures of Allah because of the worship they had performed in this world."[603]

Umm Salamah narrates, "I said, 'Messenger of Allah, are the women of this world better or the dark-eyed maidens?' He replied, 'Indeed, the women of this world are superior to the dark-eyed maidens just as the facing of a garment is superior to the lining.' I asked, 'Messenger of Allah, how is that?' He answered, 'Because of their *ṣalāh*, fasting and worship for the sake of Allah, mighty is He and majestic. Allah will clothe their faces in light and their bodies in silk. They will be fair in complexion, green in clothing and yellow in jewellery. Their incense-burners will be pearls and their combs gold. They will say, "We are the eternal women and we will never die. We are women who will always remain in comfort and ease and we will never undergo difficulty. We are women who will abide and we will never leave. We are women who are contented and will never become discontented. Fragrant good fortune to those men to whom we belong and who belong to us."'"[604]

Sexual Intercourse in the Garden

Sexual intercourse in the Garden will be a joy for men and women alike. In the Hereafter, the pleasure of intimate relations will be like no other; one cannot comprehend how wondrous the believers' joy with their spouses in the Garden will be. The Prophet's Companions would frequently ask him ﷺ if there would be sexual intercourse in the Garden, to which the Messenger of Allah replied, "[Yes] it will be with powerful desire and a penis which does not tire. Indeed, a person will have sex with a woman for forty years. He will not turn his attention elsewhere and will not leave. His only concern will be the pleasure and honour which he is enjoying."

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[602] 'Abd ar-Raḥmān, pp. 64-65; *Sunan Abī Dāwūd; Ḥilyat al-Awiyā'*, vol. 9, p. 259

[603] Al-Bayhaqī, al-Ba'th wa an-Nushūr; aṭ-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr; Abū Ya'lā; Ibn Ḥajar, Fath al-Bāri; aṭ-Ṭabarānī and others

[604] Aṭ-Ṭabarānī

DEFLOWERING VIRGINS

> Allah, exalted is He, said, "*The Companions of the Garden are busy enjoying themselves today, they and their wives reclining on couches in the shade.*"[605]

Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn Masʿūd and al-Awzāʿī said the *"busy enjoying themselves"* means that the male believers will be busy in the defloration of virgin women.[606]

Women will be repeatedly virginal in the Garden; after each sexual encounter their hymens will be restored, so that their husbands may perpetually deflower them. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked by one of his Companions, "Will we have sexual intercourse in the Garden?" He replied, "Yes, by the One in Whose hand is my self! It will be vigorous intercourse, and as soon as the man leaves her she will again become immaculate and virgin."[607]

In a tradition related by aṭ-Ṭabarānī, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "When the inhabitants of the Garden have intercourse with their women, they will find them virgins."[608]

Ibn al-Qayyim narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked, "Are we going to have righteous wives with us in the Garden?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Righteous women will be with righteous men, enjoying sexual pleasure with each other just like the sexual pleasure you enjoy in this world except that there will be no conception."[609]

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[605] Yā Sīn 36: 55-56

[606] Ibn Kathīr; al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 245; Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 167

[607] Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007, p. 192; Ibn Ḥibbān, no. 246/9 the *ḥadīth* is reported to be weak

[608] Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007, p. 192; the *ḥadīth* was also narrated by al-Bazzār. Al-Haythamī said the *ḥadīth* is weak

[609] Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007, p. 192; the *ḥadīth* was also related by Aḥmad, no. 1120

POWERFUL SEXUAL DESIRE

The Prophet ﷺ said about sexual intercourse in the Garden, "Every man in it, in a single day will be given the capacity of seventy of you."[610]

He ﷺ also said, "[Sex in the Garden] will be for eternity and there will be no sperm or ejaculation."[611]

And, "[Sex] will be with a penis that doesn't tire and sexual desire that never ends for eternity."[612]

Some of the Jews in Madinah were surprised to hear the Prophet ﷺ speaking about the physical pleasures of the Garden. Zayd ibn Arqam reports that, "A Jew came to the Messenger of Allah and said, 'Abū al-Qāṣim, you claim that the people of the Garden will eat and drink." The Messenger of Allah said, "By the the One in whose hand is my self, every person in the Garden will be given the capacity of a hundred men in eating, drinking and sexual intercourse."[613]

At-Tirmidhī related from Anas that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The believer in the Garden will be given such-and-such strength for sexual intercourse." I [Anas] asked, "Messenger of Allah, will he have the capacity to do that?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "He will be given the strength of a hundred men."[614]

PASSIONATE LOVERS

Allah described the women of the Garden as, *"devoted (ʿurub), passionate, of like age."* Commentators of the Qur'ān have said that the *"devoted, passionate"* means that they are skilful in the art of coition. The women will not be only well versed in the art of lovemaking, but they will also be pleased to satisfy their husband's desires whenever he wishes to make love. After the man enjoys the pleasures of his wife, the Prophet ﷺ informed us that he will visit his other wives, who will be just as beautiful, to make love to them too: Indeed, there is no pleasure greater for a man than sexual intercourse with a beautiful woman, except for sexual intercourse with another beautiful woman.

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī wrote, "Each time we sleep with a houri we find her virgin. Besides, the penis of the elect never softens. The erection is eternal,

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610 Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 245; at-Tirmidhī (*Jannah*, 6)

611 Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007,,p. 192. Al-Haythamī, in *Mujmaʿaz-zawāʾid* no. 419/10 Al-Haythamī said the *ḥadīth* is weak

612 Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007, p. 192. Al-Haythamī, in *Mujmaʿaz-zawāʾid* no. 420/10. Al-Haythamī said the *ḥadīth* is weak

613 Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 167

614 At-Tirmidhī. 2536

the sensation that you feel each time you make love is utterly delicious and out of this world and, were you to experience it in this world, you would faint. Besides the women he married on earth, each chosen one [i.e. Muslim] will marry seventy houris, and all with have appetising vaginas." Women will also enjoy the exhilarating pleasures of long-lasting sexual intercourse and multiple orgasms with their beloved husbands. A woman will be besotted with the extreme good looks of her husband's and marvel at his passionate lovemaking skills.

Sexual Variety in the Garden

"Variety's the very spice of life that gives it all its flavour." – William Cowper

For many men, sexual variety really is the spice of life, as every woman is a new experience and a new source of pleasure. A variety of female sexual partners can make a man's life more fulfilling and interesting, which any man who has experienced the joys of beautiful women will truly understand. Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī pointed out, "There are eight things that enhance sexual performance and increase sexual pleasure: good health, a carefree heart, a clear conscience, happiness, the right diet, a variety of sexual partners, varied skin colour in sexual partners and lots of money."[615]

Allah knows that many men have great desire for sexual variety, which is why Allah in His infinite mercy permits male believers to enjoy such pleasures in the next world for eternity, as the following traditions state, "A single man in the Garden shall wed five hundred houris, four thousand virgins, and eight thousand deflowered women, and shall embrace each one of them for a period equal to his lifetime in the world."[616]

Abū Umāmah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Allah will not admit anyone in the Garden but Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, will marry him to seventy-two wives, two from the dark-eyed maidens and seventy as his inheritance from the people of the Fire. Every one of them will have a pleasant vagina and he will have a penis that does not become flacid during intercourse."[617]

He ﷺ also said, "By the One who has my self in His Hand, every morning [in the Garden] a man will have sexual intercourse with one hundred virgins."'[618]

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[615] An-Nafzāwī (translated by Jim Colville), 1999, p. 66

[616] Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 245

[617] Ibn Mājah

[618] Related by aṭ-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* no. 718; al-Haythamī, in *Mujmaʿ az-zawā'id* no.

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar ﵄ said, "The lowest in rank of the people of the Garden will be a man with a thousand servants hastening busily on his behalf, each of whom is about a different task."[619]

Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb al-Quraẓī narrated from a person of the Anṣār that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "By the One who sent me with the truth, you are not more acquainted with your wives and places of residence in this world than the people of the Garden are acquainted with their wives and places of residence. A man of the Garden will come to seventy-two wives whom Allah specially created [in the Garden] and two wives from the descendants of Adam. The human wives will be better than the women Allah created [in the Garden] because they worshipped Allah in this world. The man will come to the first of his wives in a room made of rubies. [They will be on a] bed made of gold which is adorned with pearls. This bed will be made of seventy different types of silk. He will place his hand between her two shoulders and he will see his hand through her clothes, skin, and flesh. He will see the marrow of her leg just as a person can see the thread inside a ruby. His inside will be a reflection of her and her inside will be a reflection of him. He will not become bored with her and she will not become bored with him. Every time he comes to her, he will find her a virgin. His penis will not tire and her vagina will not experience any pain. Whilst he is in this condition, someone will announce, 'We know that you will not become bored and you will not make her bored. Both the man and woman will not experience ejaculation of sperm. You will have other wives besides her." Each time he makes his way to visit each of his wives, she will say to him, 'I swear by Allah, there is nothing in the Garden more handsome that you and there is nothing in the Garden more beloved to me than you.'"[620]

Allah said, "*And with Us there is still more.*" Commenting on this, Kathīr ibn Murrah said, "Amongst the *"still more"* bounties of the Garden is a cloud which will come over the inhabitants of the Garden. The cloud will say to them, 'What do you wish that I rain upon you?' Whatever they wish for will be rained upon them." [Kathīr then said,] "If Allah gives me the opportunity, I will definitely ask the cloud to rain beautiful women upon me!" The Prophet ﷺ said regarding its meanings, "These places are built of emeralds and jewels, in each building there will be seventy rooms of red colour, in each room seventy sub-rooms of green

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420/10; Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007, p. 192

[619] Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 245

[620] Related by al-Mundhirī in *at-Targhīb wa at-tarhīb*, no. 5530; Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007, p. 191

colour, in each sub-room there will be one throne, over each throne seventy beds of varied colours and on each bed a dark-eyed maiden. There will be seventy tablecloths in each room and seventy kinds of food on each tablecloths. There will be seven ladies in each room. Each believer will be given such strength in the morning that he can have sexual intercourse with them."

The wives of each man will not be able to see the sexual relations he enjoys with the other wives, as the following *ḥadīth* related by Muslim indicates, "In the Garden there will be a tent for a believer made of pearls, the breadth of which is sixty miles. In the believer's tent there will be his family (i.e. women) whom he will visit [one at a time], but they will not be able to see one another."[621]

WOMEN OF DIFFERENT COMPLEXIONS

Although the dark-eyed maidens of the Garden are described as being white in complexion, there will be women of other complexions, as in the following tradition related by aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī in *Nuzhah al-ʿumur,* in which the Prophet ﷺ said, "I entered the Garden and saw a red-lipped dark-skinned slavegirl. I asked, "Who is she, Jibril?" He replied, "Allah, exalted is He, knows the desire of Ja ʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib for dark-skinned women with red lips, so He created her for him."[622]

Rewards for Women

The question is often asked, if men will have multiple wives in the Garden, what is there for women? The issue was one which concerned the women Companions during the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Troubled by the fact that many of the Qur'ānic *āyats* about rewards in the Garden seemed to be addressed to men, his wife Umm Salamah asked the Prophet ﷺ, "Messenger of Allah, why aren't we mentioned in the Qur'ān on an equal footing with men?" She said, "Then, I was surprised to hear him call one day from the minbar, 'People!' As I was combing my hair at the time, I tied it up and came to the door and stood there listening to him say, 'Allah ﷻ revealed, *"Men and women who are Muslims, men and women who are believers, men and women who are obedient, men and women who are truthful, men and women who are steadfast, men and women who are humble, men and women who give ṣadaqah, men and women who fast, men and women who guard their private parts, men and women who remember Allah much:*

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[621] Muslim, 2838; al-Bukhārī, 3243. In Bukharī's narration, the tent is reported to be thirty miles long. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2007, p. 191.

[622] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 114

Allah has prepared forgiveness for them and an immense reward."'"[623] The *āyat* informed men and women alike of the justice of Allah in regards to His Divine rewards. In other Qur'ānic *āyats* about Divine reward, Allah says, "*Anyone, male or female, who does right actions and is a believer, will enter the Garden. They will not be wronged by so much as the tiniest speck.*"[624] And, "*We are your protectors in the life of this world and the Next World. You will have there all that your selves could wish for. You will have there everything you demand.*"[625] And, "*They will have anything they wish for from their Lord. That is the recompense of good-doers.*"[626]

Of course, Allah has created men and women differently; what pleases a man is different from what pleases a woman. The vast majority of early Muslim commentators on the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* specialists were of the view that men will be polygynous in the Garden and women monogamous. Commentators of the Qur'ān, like Ibn Kathīr, reported that in the Garden women will be deeply in love with their husbands not desiring anyone other than their husbands. Although women will be filled with sexual passion, they will only be amorous towards their husbands due to their intense love for them. Ibn ʿAbbās, Qatādah, ʿAtā al-Khurāsānī, Ibn Zayd and others have said that a woman of the Garden will not look desirously at men other than her husband and will not think that there is anyone in the Garden more handsome than him and will say to him, "By Allah, I do not think that there is anyone in the Garden finer than you or that there is anyone in the Garden dearer to me than you. Praise be to Allah Who has made you for me and me for you."[627]

WHAT ABOUT FEMALE JEALOUSY?

Muslim scholars have said that Allah will remove jealousy from women's hearts in the Garden so that they will not feel upset or angry with their husbands' multiple wives. There would be no feeling of insecurity either, as every woman will not only be extremely beautiful but will be happy with her appearance. This is borne out by an incident between the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his wife, Umm Salamah, who narrated that when her ʿ*iddah* after the loss of her first husband Abū Salamah had ended, Abū Bakr sent word to her proposing marriage, but she did not marry him. Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb

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623 Al-Aḥzāb 33: 35

624 An-Nisā' 4: 124

625 Fuṣṣilāt 41: 31-32

626 Az-Zumar 39: 34

627 Ibn Kathīr

with a proposal of marriage. She said, "Tell the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that I am a jealous woman and that I have sons, and none of my guardians are present [to conduct the marriage]." ʿUmar then went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and told him of what she had said. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Go back to her and tell her that as for your words 'I am a jealous woman,' I will pray to Allah to take away your jealousy. As for your words 'I have sons,' your sons will be taken care of. As for your words 'none of my guardians are present,' none of your guardians who are present or absent would object to that." [After hearing this] Umm Salamah said to her son, " ʿUmar, get up and perform the marriage to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ", which he did.[628]

In another tradition, the Prophet ﷺ said that mutual animosity will be removed from the hearts of the people of the Garden, "The first batch of people who will enter the Garden will be on the form of the moon when it is full; those who follow them immediately will be like the most brilliant star in the sky. Their hearts will be as if the heart of a single man, there will be no disagreement nor mutual hatred among them. Each of them will have two wives for each of whom the marrow of the bones of their legs will be seen through her flesh because of the great beauty."[629]

WHY DID ALLAH CREATE JEALOUSY IN WOMEN?

He ﷺ said, "Allah prescribed *jihād* for men and decreed jealousy for women in order to test them."[630]

And "Allah has prescribed *jihād* for the men of my community and ordained jealousy for the women of my community. Whichever women are patient and seek a reward, Allah will give them the reward of the martyrs."[631]

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[628] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3254

[629] Al-Bukhārī

[630] Dhakiyya Umm Ruqayya presents a practical guide for how to make polygamy work, drawn from personal experience, "Jealousy is best tackled by focusing on what you have. If you feel jealous about anything, ask yourself if it's over something that you really want, or whether you desire it simply because your co-wife has it. If it's the latter, then try to forget about it and remind yourself that you don't actually want it. If it's something you really want, then focus on how you can get it for yourself because you would like it, not because she has it. If it's the relationship you're jealous of, concentrate on building your own relationship with your husband as though she's not in the picture. If you feel that he loves her more than you, then maybe he isn't giving you enough attention or affection, and frame this as a problem in your own relationship that you need to talk to him about and resolve, rather than as a problem with your co-wife. Nothing will eliminate jealousy altogether, but they should minimise it. Remember that even ʿA'ishah ﵂ was very jealous of the Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ other wives, and even broke a plate because of it." Umm Ruqayya, 'Polygamy Survival Guide' November 2012 pp. 53-54.

Al-Jāḥiz says, "Religious duties have been imposed to test men and define the limits of their freedom."[632]

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[631] Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, citing Ibn Mas'ūd. A good *ḥadīth* according to as-Suyūṭī

[632] Al-Jāḥiẓ

PART TWO

CHAPTER 8

Erotology

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Lord! I ask You for beneficial knowledge, and I seek refuge in You from detrimental knowledge."[633]

EROTOLOGY is defined as the study and description of sexual love and lovemaking.[634] Etymologically, it is derived from the Greek word '*eros*,' meaning passionate love, and the suffix '*ology*' meaning a 'subject of study' or 'a branch of knowledge.'

Islamic Erotology

Also known as traditionalist-themed erotology, Islamic erotology is a sub-genre of the Arab-Muslim *ʿilm al-bāh* erotological literary genre. As mentioned earlier, the origins of Islamic erotic literature date back to ninth century Abbasid Baghdad, where, in educated circles, a fusion took place between ancient Arab poetic traditions of amatory verses describing female beauty and the those describing the art of coition. The two main sources for traditional Islamic erotology treatises are the Qur'ān and Sunnah (normative practice) of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. When erotic literature is kept within the boundaries of the Sacred Law and adheres to Islamic principles and teachings, it is a legitimate study for Muslims. Traditional Muslim erotologists would also make use of non-Muslim sources in their treatises, providing that they were beneficial and their content was in line with the *sharīʿah*.

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[633] Ibn Ḥibbān

[634] Merriam Webster dictionary

QUR'ĀN

Although the main theme of the Qur'ān is the relationship between Allah and His creation, it deals with various aspects of human beings' lives such as wisdom, doctrine, worship and law. It also provides guidelines for a just society, an equitable economic system and proper human sexual conduct. The Qur'ān never uses basic, crude or even objective terms when describing licit or illicit sex; when it is lawful and desirable, sex is described in appealing terms, but when it is forbidden, the words used imply strong disapproval.[635] That is the case for all traditional Islamic sciences. The Qur'ān is the foundation of Islamic erotology, as Jalāl ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī eloquently explains, "Knowledge is a turbulent ocean the floor of which cannot be reached and a lofty mountain the summit of which cannot be scaled or approached. Whoever wishes to exhaust it will be unable and whoever desires to measure it fully will fail. For did the Almighty not say, addressing His creation, '*You have only been given a little knowledge.*'[636] Our book, the Qur'ān, is the wellspring and source of all knowledge; it is the orbit in which the sun of knowledge rises and sets. In it Allah, exalted is He, has placed the knowledge of all things, and expounded all forms of guidance and misguidance. Thus practitioners of every art seek aid from the Qur'ān and rely upon it. The religious scholar (*faqīh*) derives from it the ordinances of the law, drawing from it the distinctions between what is permissible and forbidden. The grammarian builds his rules of case endings and syntax from it and refers to it in order to distinguish incorrect speech from correct. The rhetorician is guided by it to the understanding of proper arrangement and by means of it he traverses the paths of eloquence in the ordering of speech. The Qur'ān contains, moreover, stories and narrations that will admonish the people of insight and counsels and similitudes that will rein in the thoughtful and reflective, in addition to other types of knowledge that cannot be computed except by the One Who knows their full extent. Add to this, eloquence in wording and style that bewilders the intellect and enraptures the heart, an inimitability of arrangement possible only for the One Who knows all hidden things."[637]

Indeed in the Qur'ān, Allah says, "*Our Lord is He who gives each thing its created form and then guides it.*"[638] Commenting on this *āyat*, Ibn ʿAbbās said that *"guides it"* is to sexual intercourse. Saʿīd ibn Jubayr said the guidance refers to "how a man should have intercourse with a woman."[639]

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[635] Abdel Haleem, 2011. p. 129

[636] Al-Isrā' 17: 85

[637] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2012, pp. 9-10

[638] Tā Hā 20: 50

SUNNAH

> He ﷺ said, "I have left among you two things, which you will never go astray as long as you hold fast to them: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah."[640]

Although the Qur'ān is the unrivalled supreme revelation of Islam, the Sunnah (normative practice) of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is recognised as a second form of Divine revelation.[641] The believer's obedience to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is akin to obedience to Allah, "*Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah.*"[642] And He, exalted is He, said, "*Whatever the Messenger gives you you should accept and whatever he forbids you, you should forgo.*"[643]

Addressing the Prophet ﷺ in the Qur'ān, Allah instructs him to inform those who proclaim their love of Allah, to follow him, "*Say, 'If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you for your wrong actions. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'*"[644]

The life of the Prophet ﷺ was the living embodiment of the Qur'ān. Thus, his actions, speech and endorsement are studied by Muslims to understand Allah's command and prohibition, even in private matters such as sexual relations. Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said, "The Prophet ﷺ was meticulous in his sexual relations, and he ordered his example to be followed."[645] When someone said to the Prophet's Companion, Salmān al-Fārisī, "Your Prophet has taught you everything!" Salmān al-Fārisī responded, "Yes, even how to defecate!"[646]

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said, "Concerning sexual intercourse and marriage, the guidance of the Prophet ﷺ is the most complete, and by it health is preserved and the soul's gladness is complete, and the aims for which it was instituted are attained."[647]

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[639] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 64. In another narration, Ibn ʿAbbās said it refers to coition, food, drink and dwelling.

[640] Al-Ḥākim

[641] Winter, 2008, p. 22

[642] An-Nisā' 4: 80

[643] Al-Ḥashr 59: 7

[644] Āl ʿImrān 3: 31

[645] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2009, p. 20

[646] Muslim; Abū Dāwūd

[647] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 1998, pp. 181-182

NON-MUSLIM SOURCES

"Wisdom is the lost property of the believer, so wherever he finds it then he has a right to it."[648]

On the basis of the above words of the Prophet ﷺ, Muslim traditionalists such as the great Egyptian polymath Jalāl ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī made use of the works of both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars in their investigation of human sexuality. Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī frequently cited ancient Greek and Indian philosophers and physicians in his works, but would rely upon the Qur'ān and Sunnah for determining the morals and ethics of human sexual behaviour.

The *Ḥadīth* of Jābir

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī wrote, "Some erotologists said, 'If there wasn't a section on erotology except the *ḥadīth* of Jābir it would have been sufficient in its comprehensiveness. It has the following benefits:

- It teaches good treatment of spouses;
- Encourages the desire to learn something from the Chosen One (i.e. Messenger of Allah ﷺ);
- It emphasises the duty to study a topic and learn from the wisdom of people who excelled in sexual matters;
- And emphasises the duty of spreading and teaching, making knowledge clear, exhorting people and urging them to conduct themselves well.'"[649]

THE ḤADĪTH OF JĀBIR IN FULL FROM VARIOUS TRADITIONS

Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh reported that when he was on his way back to Madīnah with the Prophet ﷺ from an expedition, he began to hurry his mount. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked him why he was in such a hurry to return home. Jābir replied, "I recently married!" The Prophet ﷺ asked, "To a widow or a virgin?" to which he replied, "A widow." The Prophet ﷺ said, "But why didn't you marry a virgin, so that you could play with her, and she could play with you?"[650] Jābir replied, "Messenger of Allah! My father died as a martyr at the Battle of Uḥud, leaving behind daughters, so I did not wish to marry a young lady like them, but rather an older one who could take care of them." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "You have made the correct choice."[651] Jābir continued, "So when we were about to enter Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ said to me, 'Slow down, and enter at night, so that she who has not combed, may comb her hair, and she who has not shaved, may shave her private area.'[652] Then he ﷺ said to Jābir, 'When you enter upon her you should be gentle *(kays)*! Be gentle!'[653] When we arrived back [in Madinah] in the evening, I [Jābir] said to my wife, 'The Messenger of Allah told me to behave gently.' She replied 'I hear and I obey.' Then I slept with her until the morning."[654]

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[648] At-Tirmidhī,2687. It was graded *hasan by* aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī

[649] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, *al-Wishāḥ fī fawā'id an-nikāḥ*, aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153

[650] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5245, 5247; an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3219, 3220, 3226; at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1100. In another narration by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Why, don't you like virgins and fondling them?" Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5080

COMMENTARY

Ḥadīth specialist Ibn Ḥajar said *kays* means to seek much intercourse (*jimāʿ*) with his wife, or it may mean to encourage him to have children by having sexual intercourse.[655] Ibn Ḥibbān said that *'kays, kays'* is an encouragement to have sexual intercourse. Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī related that it has also been said that the intended meaning is to be affectionate and gentle when engaging in intercourse.[656]

Importance of Studying Erotology

Muslim scholars from various disciplines spent a great deal of time and effort in studying the sacred sources and ancient erotological texts to unravel the secrets of coition. Matters such as the benefits of intercourse, how to awaken sexual desire with effective foreplay, the use of aphrodisiacs, coital positions, lovemaking techniques, the desirable qualities of a sexual partner and attaining orgasm were all discussed at length from the perspective of the *dīn*. Present-day society is in as much need of the erotological tradition, particularly many people of faith who struggle to combine the sacred and the sensual. The loss of sacred sensuality can be reclaimed by a revival of the classic erotological tradition. The reasons why studying erotology is important are presented below.

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[651] Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1933

[652] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5245, Also related by Muslim with similar wording.

[653] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5246

[654] Ibn Ḥajar said that Ibn Khuzaymah related the last part of this narration in his *ḥadīth* compilation. Ibn Ḥajar, 2008, vol. 3, p. 3731

[655] Ibn Ḥajar, 2008, vol. 3, p. 3731

[656] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 152; al-Bukhārī said the expression means to seek having children. Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5245,

BENEFICIAL KNOWLEDGE

Beneficial knowledge is that which leads to action and the performance of good deeds. Erotic manuals were written to educate people so that they could derive benefit from in their sexual lives. Several passages from the Qur'ān and Sunnah encourage the seeking of beneficial knowledge, such as the supplication cited in the Noble Qur'ān, *"My Lord, increase me in knowledge,"*[657] the supplication in the *ḥadīth* "O Allah, I ask You for beneficial knowledge, acceptable action, and good provision,"[658] the *ḥadīth*, "The worst of men in the eyes of Allah on the Day of Rising will be the scholar who does not derive benefit from his knowledge."[659] There is also the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet ﷺ said, "The knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure out of which nothing is spent in the way of Allah,"[660] and the supplication the Prophet ﷺ made, "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from incapacity, from sloth, from cowardice, from miserliness, decrepitude and from the torment of the grave. O Allah, grant my soul its *taqwā* and purify it, You are the Best Purifier of it. You are its Protecting friend, and its Guardian. O Allah, I seek refuge in You from knowledge which does not benefit, from a heart that does not entertain fear (of Allah), from a self that does not feel contented and a supplication that is not answered.'"[661] He ﷺ also supplicated, "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from four things: knowledge which does not benefit, a heart which is not submissive, a self which has an insatiable appetite, and a supplication which is not heard,"[662] and, "Lord! I ask You for beneficial knowledge, and I seek refuge with You from knowledge without benefit."[663] He ﷺ said, "Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim,"[664] and, "Whoever Allah wants good for He gives him understanding of the *dīn*."[665]

THERE IS NO SHAME IN CARNAL KNOWLEDGE

Shyness should not prevent anyone from acquiring knowledge of sensitive matters such as sex, for, as the oft-cited aphorism states, 'there is no shame in knowledge'. Many of the early Muslims, both men and women, were dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge which they could benefit themselves and others by. Allah ﷻ said, *"But Allah is not reticent with the truth,"*[666] which has sometimes been translated as "Allah is not ashamed or shy of the truth."

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[657] Tā Hā 20: 114

[658] At-Tirmidhī, 2487; Ibn Mājah

[659] At-Tirmidhī, 268

[660] At-Tirmidhī, 280

[661] Muslim 6568

[662] Abū Dāwūd, 1543

[663] Ibn Ḥibbān

[664] At-Tirmidhī

[665] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim; Mālik, *Kitāb al-qadr*, no. 1633

ʿĀ'ishah said, "How praiseworthy are the women of the Anṣār; shyness does not prevent them from seeking an understanding of the *dīn*."[667]

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ commented, "The branches of knowledge are infinitely many; take the best that each has to offer."[668]

Mujāhid said, "Neither a shy nor an arrogant person can attain knowledge"[669]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "Knowledge is better than ignorance and although knowledge may be uncomfortable, ignorance is still more so."[670]

Many people are too shy to ask questions about sexual matters, as Muslim erotologist Ibn Yaḥyā said, "I have decided to write a practical, medical and literary book to be read by intelligent people and enjoyed by kings and friends. It is intended to be useful in the art of coition and its ethics, to show what increases and decreases sexual desire and to give cures for physical and psychological diseases that affect coition. These should be known by common people as well as by kings and chiefs who usually feel reluctant to disclose their private affairs to physicians. The book is also intended to contain such ethics of coition as must be learnt by intelligent people and such conversations, selected poems and wonderful tales as can give delight to worried readers, gladden the hearts of sad people, entertain lonely people and be beneficial both to lovers and beloveds."[671]

Al-Ḥasanī said, "Know, observant student, may Allah make us both successful, that there is a group of students of sacred knowledge who are too shy to ask questions about the (sexual) secrets of women and men from most of today's physicians. They requested me to explore this matter."[672]

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[666] Al-Aḥzāb 33: 53

[667] Muslim; Abū Dāwūd; Ibn Mājah; al-Bukhārī

[668] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, pp. 202-204. Al-Jāḥiz, *ar-Risālah al-thālithah ʿasharah mafākhirat al-jawārī wa al-ghilmān,* vol. 1, 2000, p. 73

[669] Al-Bukhārī

[670] An-Nafzāwī, (translated by Jim Colville) 1999, p. 63

[671] Ibn Yaḥyā (translated by A. Jarkas and S. Khawwam), 2008, p. 1

[672] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, p. 47

SACRED KNOWLEDGE

Sacred is defined as something which is connected to God or dedicated to a religious purpose and so deserves veneration. Christian, Jewish and Muslim scholars studied erotology as it was considered part of their respective sacred traditions. Although there is no explicit mention of sexual relations in the Biblical story of the creation of Adam and Eve, Christian and Jewish sex therapists made use of the story in their exploration of sexuality. In *Genesis*, God is reported to have said "'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.' God then caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of Adam's ribs and created a woman (Eve) from it. When Adam saw Eve, he said to her,

> 'This is now bone of my bones
> and flesh of my flesh;
> she shall be called "woman,"
> for she was taken out of man.'

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."[673]

The Song of Songs also known as the 'Song of Solomon' has also been spoken about at length by Jewish and Christian sexologists in their exploration of marital relations.[674]

Dr. Heba Kotb accurately reflects the balance of sacredness and sensuality when she said, "Please your partner often and you will please Allah."

ISLAMIC HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Early Muslims were uncompromising in their stance on the supremacy of Islam and its teachings. Matters such as the sensual delights of the Garden or the Divine rewards for licit sexual relations were not seen as shameful or irreligious. They were not apologetic about the sensual delights of their *dīn* nor did they try to to downplay the evident sexual references in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. Muslim erotologists graphically elaborated such sensual pleasures in their religious treatises in order to encourage the Muslims to perform good deeds even if only out of desire for other-worldly rewards. Erotology is one of the traditional Islamic sciences and the early Muslims did not feel shy or embarrassed about it. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ warned of the day when Muslims would be ashamed of their faith, "I fear the day when disbelievers are proud of their falsehood and the Muslims are shy of their faith."

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[673] Genesis 2: 18 – 25

[674] Wheat, Ed and Gaye, 2011, p. 30

Commentating on the *āyat*, *"Your women are fertile fields for you (ḥarthakum), so come to your fertile fields however you like. Send good ahead for yourselves and have taqwā of Allah. Know that you are going to meet Him"*[675] sexologist, Dr. Heba Kotb said, "The verse makes it known that sex shouldn't just happen when the husband wants but that the wives have rights too. I was so proud of my religion when I saw that my religion was advanced enough to talk about women's rights in sexuality many years before modern science did."[676]

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba said, "An author who deals with questions of eroticism, perfumery, hygiene and beauty has no reason to blush, therefore, when approaching questions that are neither more nor less noble than grammar, prosody, canon law or history."[677] He continues, "pious souls, grave lawyers, eminent theologians, worthy judges and venerable sheikhs devoted themselves without the slightest embarrassment to the study of eroticism; none of them could have conscientious scruples, for none of them was contravening either the letter or the spirit of the canonical teachings [of Islam]."[678]

As-Ṣuyuṭī said, "This is my faith as well as my ancestors' and the profession of my father before me – the faith of the lovers and the religion of the beloved."[679]

If it was not for the mercy of Allah, Muslims would not have experienced any honour in their illustrious history as ʿUmar proclaims, "We were the most humiliated people on Earth and Allah gave us honour through Islam. If we ever seek honour through anything else, Allah will humiliate us again."[680]

ERADICATE IGNORANCE

Due to the prevalence of male ignorance of female sexual arousal, erotologists encouraged their male readers to learn and understand the complexities involved in satisfying women in order to have a more harmonious and productive marital life. Ancient Indian erotologist Kalyana Malla, author of *Ananga Ranga* said, "It is true that no joy in the world of mortals can compare with that derived from knowledge of the Creator. Second, however, and subordinate only to this, are the satisfaction and enjoyment arising from possession of a beautiful woman. Men marry because of the peaceful gathering, love, and comfort and they often get from good and attractive women. But men do not give women full satisfaction. The reason is ignorance of the writings of the tradition, the works on love, erotic and sensual pleasure as well as disdain for different types of women. These men view women only from the perspective of an animal. They are foolish and spiritless."[681]

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[675] Al-Baqarah 2: 223

[676] Raman, *'Egypt's Dr. Ruth': Let's talk sex in the Arab world,* 2007

[677] Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 140

[678] Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 140

[679] aṣ-Ṣuyuṭī, 1987, p. 10

[680] Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak,* vol.1, pp61-62. He declared it *ṣaḥīḥ* according to the criteria of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Erotologists placed great emphasis on the importance of men satisfying women's desires; al-Ghazālī said it is the husband's duty to observe fair treatment and good conduct in twelve matters, one of them being sexual intercourse[682] and that failure in this respect could lead women to debauchery and licentiousness if their sexual needs were not met by their husbands. Ibn Sīnā also warned his male readers that some women turn to lesbianism (*musāḥaqah*) because of the inability of their husbands to satisfy their sexual desires.[683] The Muslim erotologists' encouragement of men to satisfy their wives' needs is in keeping with the advice of the Prophet ﷺ who said to his male companions, "Do not begin intercourse until she has experienced desire, like the desire you experience, lest you fulfil your desires before she does."[684]

In another narration, he ﷺ said, "When one of you has intercourse with his wife, he should truly love her (*falyaṣduqhā*), and if he finishes before her, he should not hurry her until she has gained her satisfaction."[685]

According to Egyptian sexologist, Dr. Heba Kotb, the majority of divorces in the Arab world are due to sexual problems brought about by ignorance and societal pressure. She said, with much frankness, "Many women know nothing about their bodies, not to mention sex, and they were raised to believe sex is for men and a dirty thing."

Kotb, like many of the classic erotologists, encouraged women as well as men to learn about sex in order to eradicate an ignorance that prevents many couples from having exhilarating sexual experiences.

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[681] Burton, 1991, p.68

[682] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 59

[683] Newman, 2014, p. 41

[684] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153, Ibn Qudāmah, *al-Mughnī* 8:136

[685] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153; Abdel Hameed, 2011, p. 127

ENHANCE LOVEMAKING SKILLS

Another reason for the importance of studying erotology is that it can enhance a person's sexual repertoire with additional lovemaking skills and techniques. Perfecting one's lovemaking skills is in conformity with the teaching of the Prophet ﷺ that one ought to do whatever one is doing excellently well, "Allah has prescribed excellence (*iḥsān*[686]) in all things."[687] The Prophet ﷺ ranked peremptory foreplay and failure to sexually satisfy one's wife among serious male deficiencies. Lackluster lovemaking is positively un-Islamic.[688]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "If you follow my advice, you will enjoy a pleasant embrace, which will give you the greatest satisfaction, and leave with you a delicious remembrance."[689]

Acclaimed Muslim polymath Jalāl ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī prayed for those who are skilled in the art of coition, "Praise be to Allah who created rods straight and hard as spears to wage war on vaginas and hardly anywhere else! Praise be to Him who made our preference be for females and never for males! Praise be to Him who gave as a gift the pleasure of nibbling and sucking lips, or laying breast against breast, thigh against thigh and laying our purses on the threshold of the door of clemency! You who believe, may Allah be clement to you, be attentive, use to the full so many delicate pleasures! Eternal glory and salvation be to those among you who know how to embrace, as one should, a delicate cheek, to give the right accolade to a slender waist, mount the largest vaginas in the correct way and sprinkle them quickly with the sweetness of their honey."[690]

> "The tender youth has sex for the first time ever, pulls out his penis prematurely, and says, 'God be praised!'"[691] – a Yoruba proverb meaning that a novice does not know how to relish the good things in life.

INCREASE SEXUAL CONFIDENCE

Studying erotology can also increase a person's confidence in their own lovemaking abilities by improving their skills and seductiveness. Despite the bravado that many men display, a large number of men suffer from a lack of sexual confidence. Whether this is due to a fear of rejection or a lack of self-assurance in their own abilities, learning about the nature of the opposite sex can empower and boost sexual confidence.

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[686] *Iḥsān* carries the sense of 'goodness' as well as 'beauty'. Ed.

[687] Muslim

[688] El Feki, 2010, *Sex and the Citadel*, p. 48

[689] Sheikh Nefzaoui (translated by Richard Burton), 2010, p. 49

[690] Bouhdiba, 2004, pp. 148-149; as-Suyūṭī, 1987, pp. 1-3

[691] Owomoyela, 2005, pp. 127-128

ERADICATE SEXUAL INSECURITY

Insecurity is uncertainty or anxiety about oneself or a lack of confidence. Erotology can help overcome sexual insecurities and vulnerabilities. Learning about the various ways to be seductive towards one's spouse can help overcome the psychological barriers of prudery and frigidity, which some people suffer from, in order to fully enjoy the sexual pleasures of intimacy.

A MAN WHO KNOWS HOW TO SATISFY HIS WOMAN DOES NOT FEAR HER BEING UNFAITHFUL

Some men are excessively jealous of their women out of fear that they will be unfaithful. A man who understands the nature of his woman and strives to meet both her physical and psychological needs, will eradicate the insecurity which resides within the heart.

Studying erotology can also help women eradicate some sexual insecurities they may be suffering from. Reading about sexually confident women may help inspire women to embrace their own sexuality and have a greater appreciation of their bodies. The perception that a 'good woman' is lousy in the bedroom is incorrect and 'un-Islamic' Dr Rohaya Mohammad argues: "A good woman has been perceived to be 'prim and proper' and just takes care of the children, but not much is emphasised on fulfilling the sexual needs of the husband.... To be a good wife you must also be good in bed."

MARITAL ADVICE

Being a good Muslim does not necessarily mean that one is a good lover. Unfortunately many committed and devout people neglect the physical needs and desires of their spouses, which the traditional erotologists attempted to address in their works. Although men were the primary audience for many of the classical erotologists' treatises, women were also encouraged to study the discipline, as Vatsyayana mentioned in the introduction of his famous erotological manual, *Kama Sutra,* "Even young maids should study this science of love along with its arts and sciences before marriage."[692]

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[692] Burton, 1991, p. 19

Al-Bayhaqī related in *Shuʿab al-īmān* on the authority of ʿAlī that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The woman's *jihād* is good treatment of her husband."[693]

The idealisation often presented by some people that marriage and God-consciousness (*taqwā*) will inevitably lead to a fulfilling sexual relationship is not necessarily the case. All people are not necessarily sexually compatible with one another, as the Prophet ﷺ beautifully pointed out, "Spirits are assembled armies. Those who recognise one another are friendly to one another, and those who do not recognise one another disagree."[694]

Dr. Hedaya Hartford writes, "Some men's aversion to tenderness deprives the wife of her natural right and need. Should her husband make her doubt herself for wanting to love and be loved, he may drive her either to the unlawful, or to thinking that Islam is incomplete or to the perception that he does not love her, which in due course may lead to divorce. In reality, it is this husband who is deficient and failing to adhere to the command of Allah Most High and the orders and resplendent example of our beloved Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace."[695]

UNDERSTANDING GENDER DIFFERENCES

Allah says, "*The male is not like the female.*"[696]

According to the authors of *Brain Sex*, male and female brains are structured differently because of the pre-natal activity of the genes and hormones that produce the various differences between the genders. The authors say that, in spite of 'liberationist' adjustments of nurture since the Western 'sexual revolution' movement of the 1960s, the situation of the genders remains the same in reality. The question is not one of gender equality but of understanding gender differences, as neuropsychologist Dr. Anne Moir said, "Men are different from women. They are equal only in their common membership of the same species, humankind. To maintain that they are the same in aptitude, skill or behaviour is to build a society based on a biological and scientific lie."[697]

It is not uncommon in this day and age for men and women to enter into marriage under the misconception that they are essentially the same, when they are quite clearly not. A summary of the differences that there is neurological evidence for includes that, "Women crave emotional intimacy, interdependence, and verbal affirmation in their daily life with their partner, while men assume that financial security and a good sex-life form the basis of a successful marriage. The man does not properly appreciate just how much a woman's biology makes her vulnerable in changes in mood, while the woman will not know that her man's tendency to 'blow' at her is in large part attributed to a biologically lower threshold for anger and frustration.

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[693] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 145

[694] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, pp. 26-27. The word *arwāḥ* is translated as spirits.

[695] Hartford, 2007, pp. 156-157

[696] Al-'Imrān 3: 36

[697] Moir and Jessel, 1991, p. 5

"Women perennially complain that men do not communicate, yet men's brains are not structured to make them want to talk frequently about their deepest feelings – the parts of their brain relating to feelings and to conveying thoughts are literally in separate places."[698]

MEN AND WOMEN PLAY THE SAME GAME BUT WITH DIFFERENT RULES.

Perceptions of love and ways to arouse desire differ between the sexes. There are some men who incorrectly assume that they can buy women's love without investing time and effort. Similarly there are some women who think that their love and affection for their husbands fulfils their husbands' sexual desire. This lack of understanding between the sexes is a void that the erotologists tried to fill by explaining how men can fulfil the emotional needs of their wives and how women can fulfil the physical needs of their husbands. Relationship writer, Sarah Elizabeth Malinak said, "Men show their love for their women differently than women show their love for men. If we women could really grasp this fact, relationships all over the world would improve."

Women desire to hear loving words and prolonged foreplay as the Prophet ﷺ asserted in several prophetic traditions.

In her article on the importance of sexual intercourse for men in marriage, Christian author and marriage counsellor Barbara Rainley argued that sexual intercourse is an inseparable part of a man's masculinity. She asserts that men's original creational form is very different from women's, particularly in their pursuit for marital romance. The husband pursues romance based on his sexual passion, and the wife is more concerned about the relationship. A woman's picture of romance tends to revolve around her emotional needs and her thirst for a relationship with her husband. She wants to be wined and dined, cuddled, complimented and forever cherished. While men too have emotional needs, a man's view of romance is much more focused on sexual intercourse. In that regard, male sexuality is simplistic as it is usually demonstrated in the act of sexual intercourse whereas women have multiple avenues for expressing the essence of theirs. Rainley concludes that women participate in the act of sexual intercourse as well as experiencing childbearing and nursing, which are affirmations of female sexuality. Al-Jāḥiẓ expressed a similar sentiment, when he spoke of the superiority of women's sexuality over men's, "In some respect, women are superior to men; it is they who are desired, courted, loved and pursued."

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[698] Butler-Bowdon, 2006, pp. 207-208

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

A stereotype is a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular person or type of person. Just as some non-Muslims have a negative stereotype that Muslims have 'harems of women' and 'unbridled lust,' not un-tinged with some degree of envy, some Muslims also have a negative stereotype that non-Muslims are immoral or amoral. Western women in particular are often thought by conservative Muslims to be promiscuous. The misconception of some Muslim men that Western women, mainly white European non-Muslim women, are an 'easy catch' is reinforced by pornography and the fact that some women visit Muslim countries as sexual tourists. Traditional erotologists challenged many of the sexual stereotypes by presenting the diversity of the human sexuality of people of various faiths.

SEXUAL SATISFACTION

Sexual satisfaction is significant in maintaining a healthy, romantic relationship. Sexologists such as Dr. Heba Kotb have said that many marital relationships break down due to a lack of sexual satisfaction, on either the part of the man or the woman and often both. Sexual problems, also known as sexual dysfunctions, are fairly common, usually in the form of little interest in sex or anorgasmia (difficulty in achieving an orgasm).

Self-stimulation thus becomes a means of achieving sexual satisfaction, since individuals are more aware of their own sexual wants and needs. Since masturbation is disapproved of in the Sacred Law, however, couples are advised to get to know each others' sexual needs. They ought to communicate openly and kindly in order to satisfy their spouses sexually, which will in turn help maintain a healthy and fulfilling relationship. Author and psychiatrist Dr. Roxanne Dryden-Edwards wrote, "Communication, both generally, and about one's sexual needs, is thought to be the strongest factor in achieving sexual satisfaction. Women who tend to be highly sexually assertive tend to have higher levels of desire, orgasm ability and sexual satisfaction compared to their nonassertive counterparts. The more couples tend to be affectionate, both sexually and otherwise, the higher their sexual satisfaction tends to be. Interestingly, even the form of communication can have an impact on sexual satisfaction. For example, nonverbal communication during sex is thought to be more likely associated with sexual satisfaction than verbal communication during sex."

Imam al-Ghazali related in the Counsel for Kings [*Nasihat al-Muluk*]; The Muslim general Ahnaf ibn Qays said, "If you want women to like you, satisfy them sexually and treat them tenderly." Mughirah ibn Shu'bah said, "I have spent my life with women in three ways: during my youth, in having sexual intercourse (with them); during my middle age, in being witty and tender (with them); and during my old age, in keeping together adequate wealth (for them)." Malik ibn Anas is reported to have said, "A woman needs to be maintained financially, spiritually, morally and above all intellectually because women are creatures of sound, and men are creatures of sight, and above all you must know the art of a relationship is based upon communication."

HUMOUR

Humour is important for relaxation and even for educational purposes, and, as is said, many a true word is spoken in jest. Truthful humour is from the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and erotologists would often make use of humorous anecdotes, quotes and idioms to educate their readers about sexual play. Ibn Ḥazm reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Recreate your souls with a little vanity, in order that it may aid people to hold fast to the truth."[699]

Simāk ibn Ḥarb asked Jābir ibn Samurah, "Did you sit in the company of the Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Yes, very often. He used to sit at the place where he observed the morning or dawn prayer till the sun rose or when it had risen; then he would stand, and they (his Companions) would talk about matters [pertaining to the days] of Ignorance, and they would laugh [at these matters] while [the Prophet ﷺ] only smiled."[700]

The Prophet ﷺ used to joke with his Companions but used only to tell the truth.[701] A man said to Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah, "Joking is not right! It should be denounced." Sufyān replied, "No, it is Sunnah, but only for those who know how to do it and do it at the appropriate time."

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[699] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, p.17

[700] Muslim

[701] At-Tirmidhī

Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنه said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came upon a group of women which included Umm Sulaymān. He said, "Anjashah (the name of a camel driver)! Be gentle when you drive [the camels] carrying the glass vessels (i.e. women)."[702]

Abū Qilābah said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ uttered words which, if someone amongst you had done so, you would have admonished him for it."[703]

Abū Hurayrah reported that the people said, "Messenger of Allah, you joke with us?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "[Yes], but I only speak the truth."[704]

Scholars also advise us to engage in some humour from time to time. Ash-Sha ʿbī said, "The mind tires just like the body, so give it a little wit and sparkle now and then." [705] The noble Companion Abū ad-Dardā' said, "I like to divert myself occasionally with a little frivolity to avoid the risk of becoming bored by too much sobriety." [706]

Ibn Mas ʿūd said, "Mix with people on the condition that your *dīn* is not jeopardised, and jest with the family."[707]

Al-Jāḥiz advised, "Authors of works on ethical instruction should not tax the reader by concentrating exclusively on intellectual and serious matters, on harsh truths and on concepts that are difficult to grasp. Patience has its limits. It is no bad thing for a book to be animated by a little humour – although too much will render it just as facile as an excess of sobriety makes for heavy-going"[708]

Traditional erotologists served their readers by providing informative yet entertaining treatises tackling many topics that the élites of their times would shy away form. Sometimes humour and light entertainment aid the educational process, as in the old English adage, "A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down."

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[702] The Prophet ﷺ compared women to glass vessels due to their tenderness and vulnerability. al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*. book 14, *ḥadīth* no. 264

[703] Al-Bukhārī

[704] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, book 14, *ḥadīth* number 265

[705] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, pp. 202-204. Al-Jāḥiz, *ar-Risālah ath-thālithaha, mafākhirat al-jawārī wa al-ghilmān*, vol. 1, p. 73

[706] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, pp. 202-204. Al-Jāḥiz, *ar-Risālah ath-thālithah, mafākhirat al-jawārī wa al-ghilmān*, vol. 1, p. 73

[707] Al-Bukhārī

[708] Al-Jāḥiz, (translated by Jim Colville), 2002, p. 177. Al-Jāḥiz was neither merely an amusing writer, nor a serious scholar according to the dominant conventions of scholarly seriousness of his time or ours. He apparently cared deeply for entertaining scholarly communication. That's an idea worth the effort for scholars to understand.

Below are examples of humorous anecdotes and sexual euphemisms to cheer the heart and put a smile on the face:

Ibn Falīta relates, "There was a woman who was watching her husband fighting in a battle and someone who was standing by her said that her husband was a good warrior who knew how to penetrate the enemy with his lance. The woman replied, 'But he is not good at the [type of] penetration that will benefit me!'"[709]

> "Men who say women belong in the kitchen, obviously do not know what to do with them in the bedroom."
>
> "Women who think that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach are aiming a bit too high!"[710]
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> "If you don't like oral sex, keep your mouth shut!"
>
> "Sex is like air, it's not important unless you aren't getting any."

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[709] Ibn Muhammad al-Yemini, 2006, p. 26

[710] This is a play on the old saying, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." Delicious food is indeed a weakness for men but not as great as the male weakness for sexual intercourse.

CHAPTER 9

The Benefits of Sexual Intercourse

The Prophet ﷺ said, "*In the sexual intercourse of each of you there is a ṣadaqah.*" [711]

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE HAS many benefits, which knowledgeable erotologists, physiologists, men of social standing and dignitaries of the *dīn* have spoken about at great length. In this chapter, from their findings we will highlight some of the spiritual, psychological and physical health benefits of sexual intercourse .[712]

Spiritual Benefits

As the spirit is a matter of the spiritual realm, the spiritual benefits of sexual intercourse can only be known from what has been related from the sacred texts, Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.

When the Prophet ﷺ was asked by some of the Jews of Madinah about the nature of the spirit (*rūḥ*), Allah revealed, "They will ask you about the *rūḥ*. Say: 'The *rūḥ* is my Lord's concern. You have only been given a little knowledge.'"[713]

The following are some traditions from the sacred texts and from Muslim scholars speaking about the spiritual benefits of sexual intercourse.

Abū Dharr ؓ narrated that, "Some people from the Companions of the Messenger of Allah said to the Prophet ﷺ, 'Messenger of Allah, the people of great wealth have gone off with the rewards. They pray as we pray, fast as we fast, and pay the *zakāh* with the excess of their properties.' He said, 'Has Allah not given you that with which you can give *ṣadaqah*? Truly, in every glorification there is *ṣadaqah*, in every magnification (*takbīr*) there is *ṣadaqah*, every praise is *ṣadaqah*, in every "There is no god but Allah" there is *ṣadaqah*, in every command to the good there is *ṣadaqah*, in every forbidding of the wrong there is *ṣadaqah* and in every act of sexual intercourse by any of you there is *ṣadaqah*.' They said, 'Messenger of Allah, can one of us approach his appetite and have a reward for it?' He said, 'What do you think, if he had put it into something *ḥarām* would there not have been a wrong [written] against him? Similarly if he puts it in the *ḥalāl* there is a reward for him.'"[714]

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[711] Muslim, *Kitāb az-zakāh*, 1006

[712] Jawad, 1998, p. 9

[713] Al-Isrā' 17: 85

Commentating on this *ḥadīth*, an-Nawawi said, regarding the words of the Prophet ﷺ, "and in every act of sexual intercourse (*buḍʿ*) by any of you there is *ṣadaqah* (charity)" "the word *buḍʿ* may refer to sexual intercourse or it may refer to the private parts themselves. Both interpretations of the meaning of the *ḥadīth* are sound. This is proof that permissible actions may become acts of worship, if there is a sincere intention. Sexual intercourse may be an act of worship if the intention behind it is to fulfil the rights of one's wife, to treat her kindly as enjoined by Allah, exalted is He, to seek a righteous child, to keep oneself or one's wife chaste, to prevent both partners from looking, thinking or desiring *ḥarām* things, and other good intentions."[715]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Everything which does not contain the remembrance of Allah is nonsense and distraction, except for four things: walking between two [military] targets, disciplining a horse, engaging in foreplay with one's womenfolk and learning swimming."[716]

And, "If one of you has gone into his wife and has said, 'In the name of Allah, O Allah keep us away from Shaytan, and keep Shaytan away from what You have provided us,' then the child that is destined to come from them will never be troubled by Shaytan."[717]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Allah marvels at a man's dalliance with his wife. He writes for them both a reward and gives them both wealth."[718]

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[714] Muslim, *Kitāb az-zakāh*, 1006

[715] An-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*, p. 641

[716] An-Nasā'ī,

[717] Muslim 1434,, al-Bukhārī 141,

[718] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol.1, p. 154

A tradition related by many erotologists states, "When a husband and his wife look at each other lovingly, Allah will look at them with His merciful eye. When they hold hands their sins will fall away from between their fingers. When they engage in coitus they will be surrounded by prayerful angels. For every sensation of their delight there is a counterpart of reward for them in the Garden as huge as a mountain. If the wife conceives, she will have the rewards of a worshipper who is constantly engaged in prayer, fasting and in the struggle in the way of Allah. When she delivers a child, only Allah knows the magnitude of the rewards stored for the parents in the Garden."[719]

Al-Ghazālī said, "Know that man has been made subject to sexual desire for two beneficial reasons. The first of these is that by knowing its delight he is able to draw an analogy that suggests to him what the delight of the Afterlife must be like. For the delight of sexual act, were it to last, would be the greatest pleasure of the body, just as the pain of a burn is the body's greatest agony. Encouragement and deterrence, which drive people towards their saving happiness, can only be brought about by means of palpable pain and pleasure, since what cannot be perceived through experience will never be greatly desired. The second reason is that it allows the human race to continue and the world to abide. Such are its benefits.[720]

Psychological Benefits

Professor of sociology and author of *Sexuality in Islam,* Abdelwahab Bouhdiba said, "Sexual intercourse applied in the laudable way has many beneficial effects. It drives away grieving, subdues melancholic depression, epilepsy and irascibility, it reduces corpulence resulting from the retention of the phlegmatic moistures, diminishes the frequency of nightly pollutions, improves digestion, stimulates the appetite and prevents a disease called paralysis of the soul (*buṭlān an-nafs*) entailing the occurrence of fainting fits. This is not only valid for men, but also for women, because their bodies function in a way parallel to the bodies of men and equally produce sperm which is emitted during sexual activity, an idea taken over from ancient medical theory."[721]

Al-Jāḥiz said, "Consider this: if a man had to choose between riches for the rest of his days and the joy of sex for the rest of his days, he would choose lasting poverty coupled with uninterrupted pleasure."[722]

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[719] Jawad, 1998, p. 9, *Musnad* of Zayd ibn ʿAlī, Beirut, 1966, p. 302; Abdul-Rauf, 1993, p. 94

[720] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 165

[721] Bouhdiba, 2004,

At-Tirmidhī related in *Nawādir al-uṣūl* that the sage Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir used to supplicate, "O Allah! Strengthen my penis, for it is beneficial for my wife."[723]

Aṭ-Ṭūsī said, "There is no greater pleasure than that of sexual intercourse. It is part of the natural disposition and it is mixed into the make-up of human beings and all other animals."[724] It has been said about the benefits of good sex: "To keep a man happy, a woman must keep his stomach full [with good food] and testicles empty [with good sex]."

"A woman needs more than good sex to be happy. If you don't satisfy her emotional needs, she will feel used not loved."

"People who say sex is not important are clearly not having good sex!"

SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE;

- Better moods
- Improves intimacy between spouses
- Improves mental clarity and cognitive function
- Improves self-esteem and increases confidence
- Improves sleep
- Increases levels of oestrogen and progesterone for women and testosterone for men[725]
- Reduces stress levels
- Relieves pain
- Relieves bouts of depression[726]

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[722] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Nisāʿ* in al-Mazīdī's *Asrār al-jimāʿ*, p. 133

[723] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153

[724] Aṭ-Ṭūsī, 2014, p. 90

[725] Oestrogen is a female sex hormone produced by the ovaries, the adrenal gland, and (in small quantities) by body fat. Oestrogen helps to retain calcium in bones, regulates the balance of HDL and LDL cholesterol in the bloodstream, and aids the maintenance of blood-sugar levels, memory functions, and emotional balance. Progesterone is a female sex hormone produced in its largest amounts during and after ovulation. It prepares the uterus for the implantation of a fertilised egg. It also helps reduce body fat, aids in relaxation and reduction of anxiety, and promotes hair growth. Testosterone – the principal male sex hormone – is also produced in smaller amounts in women's bodies mostly by the ovaries and adrenal glands. It plays an important role in health and well-being. Testosterone affects libido, mood, energy, and body fat and helps to protect against osteoporosis.

[726] "Sexual activity relaxes the nervous, respiratory and circulatory systems, as brain endorphins are released during sexual intercourse. Endorphins provide free, health-enhancing benefits without negative side-effects. Endorphins are released during orgasm

- Optimises fertility and helps maintain vaginal youth
- Strengthens feelings of love and cements bonds of affection

Health Benefits

Engaging in regular sexual activity can be just as important to a person's overall health as exercise and proper nutrition. The ancients were fully aware of the health benefits of sexual intercourse and would encourage people to engage in regular sexual intercourse with their spouses for their marital and physical well-being.

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said, "Sexual intercourse was originally created for three matters, which are its primary aims: (1) preservation of progeny and the continuation of the human species, so as to complete the total number of persons that Allah has decreed to be in the world; (2) expulsion of the fluid (*mā'*) which if restricted and retained would harm the entire body; and (3) fulfilment of desire, attainment of pleasure and enjoyment of Allah's bounty. This last, alone, is the benefit which will remain in the Garden; for there is no procreation there, nor any bodily retention to be evacuated by the descent of fluid. Outstanding physicians consider that sexual intercourse is among the most laudable ways of preserving health.

"When there is an excess of semen, know that it should not be emitted save in the seeking of offspring, or else to expel that which is congested. If it remains long congested, it generates grave illnesses such as delusions, madness, epilepsy and others. And its expulsion may cure many of these illnesses. If it remains restricted a long while, it becomes corrupt and changes to a poisonous quality which brings about grave illnesses such as have been mentioned. That is why the constitution repels it, without intercourse, when it becomes too plentiful in the body.

"Some of the first generations have said that a man must commit himself to three things: (1) he must not neglect walking so that if he needs to walk, then he is able to do so; (2) he must not refrain from eating, for his intestines would grow narrow; (3) he must not leave aside intercourse, for if a well is not emptied, its water ceases.

"Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā' [ar-Rāzī] said, 'If a man refrains from sexual intercourse for a long time, the power of his nerves becomes

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and can provide varying degrees of pain relief. Endorphins block pain signals from reaching the nervous system and thus are critical to maintaining optimum health. These substances produce physical feelings of well-being that translate into positive emotional and mental states. Consciously cultivating endorphins gives you the power to literally turn yourself on whenever you want. Endorphins can also help heighten sexual energy and libido." Cwynar, 2012, p. 131

weak, and their vessels become blocked, and the male organ will contract.' He said, 'I have seen a group who had renounced this due to some kind of asceticism; their bodies grew cold, their movements were difficult, and distress afflicted them without reason; their appetite and digestion were impaired.'"[727]

Aṭ-Ṭūsī said, "When you have learned about intercourse and practise it as it should be, you will acquire twenty-four benefits, for instance: it cures melancholy, protects against yellow bile and phlegm illnesses, and causes happiness and high spirits, as described by past scholars, sages and physicians who based themselves on their experiments and experience."[728]

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba relates that Shaykh an-Nafzāwī said, "To make love well, one has only to be healthy in body and mind – and above all not over fat, which forces men and women to exhausting and somewhat grotesque gymnastic exercise."[729]

Abu al-Qasim al-Junaid, a prominent Sufi regarded as a leading exponent of the moderate or 'sober' approach of mysticism used to say, "I need sexual intercourse just as I need food." Commenting on this, al-Ghazālī said, "The wife is in fact nourishment and a means of keeping the heart pure. That is why the Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded anyone who caught sight of a woman, and desired her, to couple with his wife, since that would dispel the temptation from his soul."[730]

SOME HEALTH BENEFITS OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE:

- Better blood pressure
- Boosts libido
- Burns calories
- Clears skin [731]
- Improve bladder control in women
- Improves health of the heart
- Increases oxytocin
- Reduces risk of prostate and breast cancer
- Increases oxygenation[732]

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727 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 1998, pp. 181-182

728 Aṭ-Ṭūsī, 2014, p. 89

729 Bouhdiba, 2004, pp. 153-154;

730 Al-Ghazali, 2007, p. 24

731 Sweating during intercourse cleanses the pores of the skin, making the skin brighter and decreasing the risk of developing dermatitis.

732 Sexual intercourse enhances blood flow and respiration. The increase in the rate at

- Burns calories and can help one to lose weight.
- Slows ageing
- Strengthens immune system[733]

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which blood and air circulate corresponds to a greater supply of oxygen throughout the body, which is vital for optimal organ and tissue health.

733 Sexual intercourse increases the level of immune-boosting antibody immunoglobulin A (IgA), which makes the body stronger and more able to resist illnesses such as common colds, fevers and other infections.

CHAPTER 10

The Man of Quality

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The best of you are
those who are best towards their wives."[734]

IN GENERAL, WOMEN tend to place greater emphasis on the desirability of a man's psychological qualities as opposed to the physical qualities of good looks and physique. Research by psychologists has found that women's preferences vis-à-vis men vary depending on their circumstances. During peak levels of fertility, women tend to become attracted to more masculine and socially dominant men. Whereas, in less fertile phases, women tend to be attracted to men possessing more 'feminine' and compassionate qualities.[735] Some of the common desirable and undesirables qualities that erotologists and psychologists have identified in their studies into what women seek in male sexual partners are as follows:

Desirable Qualities

Ibn Kemal Pesha said, "The characteristics which a woman loves in a man are that he is: generous, courageous, truthful, sweet talking, intelligent, funny, fulfils his promises and responsibilities, is understanding, courteous, well-dressed, healthy, good-mannered and without bodily defect; as well as having many respectable friends, he should not be arrogant; that he be broad chested; a man who avoids foolish people and those who are not good; a man whom people admire and imitate for his character, dress-sense and conduct.

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[734] At-Tirmidhī, 1162. The Prophet ﷺ was the best of men in his behaviour towards his wives.

[735] See Mehta, Vinita, 'What Women want in Men' in *Psychology Today*, Aug 2013, *Cindy Meston and David Buss' Why Women Have Sex, and* Zeifman, 2013, pp. 311-327.

"The things which attract her to him is that he has clean teeth which he cleans with a toothbrush, fresh breath, clean hands and feet with clipped nails, wears beautiful clothes and has a pleasant smell. In addition to these characteristics, if he has wealth and status, he is the most complete and adorable man in the eyes of women."[736]

AFFECTION

Women desire openly affectionate men. They have an innate desire to be cherished, adored and loved. A man who is able to give his lady some tender loving care is more likely to be able to win her heart. Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood says, "Experts agree that the basic psychological need of a man is respect, while that of a woman is love."[737]

It has been said, "To make a woman happy, give her these three things: attention, affection and appreciation."

APPRECIATIVE

Appreciative refers to feeling or showing gratitude or pleasure. An appreciative man recognises and understands the worth of his woman. He admires her and shows his appreciation of her God-given beauty and good character by his words and actions. An African proverb has it, "The beauty of a woman becomes useless if there is no one to admire it"

It has been said, "Most men aren't smart enough to realise that the higher you elevate your woman, the less available she is for other men. When your break her down, you make her accessible to anyone she thinks will treat her better."

ATTENTIVENESS

Attentiveness means assiduously attending to the comfort or wishes of others. It can also mean being polite and courteous. Every woman wants to feel treasured and loved. A man who can make a women feel that he is thinking about her and is attentive to her needs will increase the desire in her heart for him.

Victor Hugo advised, "When a woman is talking to you, listen to what she says with her eyes."

A man who is attentive to the small details of her appearance such as changes in her clothes, appearance and hair will impress her a great deal.

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[736] Ibn Kemal Pesha, 2010, p. 165

[737] Maqsood, 2009, p. 120

A man possessing this trait will also possess good listening skills.

It has been said, "Observe the eyes for they are a window to her soul."

CHARISMA

Charisma is compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others, and is the ability to draw a woman closer to you without touching her. In order to master the art of being seductive, a man must excel in three things: confidence, communication and charisma.

CHIVALRY

Chivalry is courteous behaviour towards women.

Ibn Yaḥyā said, "If a man wants his beloved to be satisfied, it is necessary that he yields to her. Thus a man should not become angry when he hears harsh words from his beloved, for tolerating one's beloved is a virtue."[738]

Like a rose, every beautiful woman has thorns and, as the ancient proverb states, "He who wants a rose must respect her thorns."

COMPATIBILITY

Compatibility refers to the state in which a man and a woman are able to have a relationship without problems or conflict. There are two main forms of compatibility that women seek in men: cultural and emotional compatibility. In this context, cultural compatibility refers to the ability of a man to understand and relate to a woman's culture and her concept of romance.[739] Emotional compatibility is the psychological connection between a man and a woman, sometimes known as 'sexual chemistry.' Sexual chemistry is extremely important for the process of female arousal, as romantic attraction often results from a mixture of physical attraction and rapport.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Spirits are assembled armies. Those who recognise one another are friendly to one another, and those who do not recognise one another disagree."[740] Commenting on this, al-Qurṭubī said, "Although they are all spirits, they differ in various ways, so a person will feel an affinity with spirits of one kind, and will get along with them because of the special quality that they have in common. So we notice that people of all types will get along with those for whom they have an affinity, and will keep away from those who are of other types. We may also note that within any given group or type, people may get along with some and dislike others, and this is in accordance with issues or qualities that form the basis of love or hate."[741]

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[738] Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, p. 90

[739] Culture is defined as the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society.

[740] Al-Bukhārī

An-Nawawi added, "With regard to the words of the Prophet, "Spirits are assembled armies. Those who recognise one another are friendly to one another, and those who do not recognise one another disagree"*is* scholars said that the meaning is groups gathered together, or different types. As for them getting along, this happens because of something in common between them that Allah has created. It is said that they are similar attributes that Allah has created in them, or that they were created in a group and then dispersed in their bodies, so people who have similar characteristics will like one another, and those who do not have similar characteristics will not like one another."[742]

Allah ﷻ said, "*Good women are for good men and good men are for good women.*"[743]

Among the aphorisms on this matter there are the following:

- Never settle for less when you deserve more.
- Attract what you expect, reflect what you desire, become what you respect, and mirror what you admire.
- It's amazing to be touched by the person who understands your mind, acknowledges your flaws and loves your soul.

CONFIDENT

Confidence is a feeling of self-assurance arising from an appreciation of one's own God-given abilities or qualities. Confidence is a captivating quality that makes people gravitate towards that person. Women respect confidence and tend to be drawn to a confident man who is not intimidated by beautiful women's charm or fineries.

Indeed confidence attracts women like nectar attracts bees. Confidence should not be confused with arrogance, as the two concepts are far from each other. Arrogance is thinking you are above someone else, confidence is knowing no one is above you.

CONVERSATIONALIST

A person who is good at or fond of engaging in conversation is known as a conversationalist. There is nothing like a fine conversation with someone possessing a good mind. Women cherish a man who can converse well and engage in meaningful discussion. Latin-American writer Isabel Allende famously wrote, "For women the best aphrodisiacs are words. The G-Spot is in the ears. He who looks for it below there is wasting his time." There is little more erotic than a good conversation. The Chinese proverb has it thus, "A single conversation with a wise man is better than ten years of study."

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[741] Al-Qurṭubī

[742] An-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj fi sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*

[743] An-Nūr 24: 26

COURAGE

Courage, which derives from the French *la couer* – the heart, is the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere and withstand danger or the fear of difficulty and danger. Courage is a traditional masculine virtue which is admired and respected by both men and women alike. Some women find courage in a man more attractive than confidence, because courage represents the willingness to take a risk whilst confidence does not.

A Congolese proverb has it thus, "He who wants honey must have the courage to face the bees."

Just like honey which is sweet, healthy and wholesome, a good woman is usually difficult to attain without bravery and a sense of fearlessness. Some hold that the primordial nature of man is to hunt and in order to hunt effectively, a man must have the heart of a lion.

"The wicked flee though no one pursues,
But the righteous are as bold as a lion."[744]

DEBONAIR

From the French word *debonaire* (meaning a person of good lineage or disposition), debonair is the quality of a man who is confident, stylish and charming. Debonair can also be used to describe a man who dresses and acts in an appealing and sophisticated way. A suave appearance is known to gain the admiration of women as the well-known saying goes, "A well-tailored suit is to women what lingerie is to men."

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "The man of quality should be purposeful and serious, clean and well-groomed, of good build and handsome appearance. He should always speak the truth and never lie. He should be courageous and generous, with a noble spirit and a gentle heart. He will do what he says and never betrays a confidence or breaks a promise. That is the sort of man women will cherish and desire to be loved and be penetrated by."[745]

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[744] Proverbs 28:1

[745] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, p.10

Ibn al-Jawzī said in *Sayd al-Khāṭir* that when a man stays filthy, it will cause his wife to dislike him. She may feel uncomfortable discussing it with him, but it will inevitably result in her losing interest in him. When a man keeps himself clean and pure, the wife will naturally be drawn towards him. Women are but the other half of humankind, and just as a man may dislike something of her, she too may dislike something of him.[746]

ELOQUENCE

Eloquence is the quality of persuasive and powerful expression. An eloquent man has the ability to use language with fluency and aptness. Eloquence involves a degree of wisdom and indicates intelligence, culture and sophistication, qualities which women desire in a man.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Some eloquence is magic."[747]

Ibn Shubrumah said, "I have not seen a garment worn by men that is more beautiful than eloquence of speech, nor have I seen a garment worn by women that is more beautiful than meat."[748]

EYES

A lot of women rank a man's eyes as his most attractive feature. Some women favour eyes of a particular colour, others favour piercing eyes. Eyes are considered to be the gateway to the soul, and many women become attracted to a man they can connect to by merely looking into his eyes.

FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness refers to being sexually loyal and steadfast to one's spouse. The man who is most treasured by women is one who is capable of attaining desirable women but chooses to be sexually faithful.

Ibn Ḥazm said, "Fidelity is only praiseworthy when a man is in the position to be unfaithful."[749]

It has been said that a wife's loyalty is tested when her husband has nothing, but a husband's loyalty is tested when he has everything.

FATHERHOOD

Some women find fatherhood extremely attractive in a man. A devoted father shows a great amount of responsibility, which women desire in a man. The ability to sire children is not the same as taking care of one's offspring, as the African-American activist Malcolm X pointed out, "Father only means that you are taking care of your children. That's what it means to be a father. It doesn't mean having babies. Anybody can make a baby, but a father helps to raise his children. There is another word for fatherhood. It's called responsibility."

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[746] Al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 49

[747] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5146; Mālik, *Kitāb al-kalām*, no. 1820

[748] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 117

[749] Ibn Ḥazm, 1994, p. 157

GOD-FEARING

A God-fearing man is a devout man who is committed to serving his Lord to the best of his abilities. Described in Arabic as *taqwā* (God-consciousness), a man of *taqwā* treats women with respect and honour, because they are a trust from Allah, as the Prophet ﷺ informed us, "Each of you is a shepherd and responsible for his flock. An Imam is a shepherd and he is responsible for those in his care. A man is a shepherd in his family and is responsible for those in his care. The woman is a shepherd in her husband's house and is responsible for those in her care. The servant is a shepherd of his master's property and is responsible for what is in his care."[750]

GOOD CHARACTER

Character refers to the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual. A good character is also referred to as having a "good personality." Personality refers to the combination of characteristics of qualities that form an individual's distinctive character. The Prophet ﷺ said, "The best of you are those who possess the best character."[751] In another tradition, he ﷺ said, "The most complete of believers in faith is he who has the best character, and the best of you are those who are best in character towards your wives."[752]

One father's counsel to his son on his son's wedding day:

"Dear son, you will not attain good fortune in your home except by ten qualities of character which you must show your wife. So remember them and be enthusiastic in acting upon them.

"As for the first two: women love attention and to be told clearly that they are loved. So don't be stingy in expressing your love for your wife. If you become limited in expressing your love, you will create a barrier of harshness between you and her, and there will be a decrease in affection.

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[750] Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 6719; Muslim, 1829

[751] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

[752] At-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-īmān ʿan rasūl Allāh*, 2612. At-Tirmidhī said the *ḥadīth* is *ḥasan*. Al-Mundhirī, 2993. The *ḥadīth* is regarded as weak by al-Mundhirī, al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 63, al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 53. The tradition related in at-Tirmidhī is said to have rigorously authenticated chain of transmission.

"As for the third; women hate a strict, overcautious man, yet they seek to make use of the soft vulnerable one. So use each quality appropriately. This will be more appealing for love and it will bring you peace of mind.

"As for the fourth: women love to receive from their husbands what their husbands love to receive from them, such as kind words, a good appearance, clean clothes and a pleasant odour. Therefore, always remain in that state. Keep away from approaching your wife when your body is sweaty and your clothes are dirty.

"As for the fifth: the house is under the sovereignty of the woman. While she remains therein, she feels that she is sitting upon her throne, and that she is the chief of the house. Stay clear of destroying this kingdom of hers and never attempt to dethrone her, otherwise you will be trying to snatch her sovereignty. A king becomes most angry at someone who tries to strip him of his authority, even if he tries to present it as something else.

"As for the sixth: a woman wants to love her husband, but at the same time she does not want to lose her family. So do not put yourself and her family in the same scale, because then she must choose either you or her family. And even if she does choose you over her family, she will remain in anxiety, which will then turn into hatred towards you in your daily life.

"As for the seventh: surely woman has been created from a curved rib, and this is the secret of her beauty, and the secret of the attraction towards her. And this is no defect in her, because 'the eyebrows are an adornment for her because of its curve'. So if she errs, do not rebuke her in a manner roughly, attempting to straighten her; because if you do that, you will simply break her and breaking her is divorce. At the same time do not let her off her mistake, otherwise her curvedness will increase and she will become arrogant. Thereafter, she will never soften towards you and she won't listen to you, so stay in between the two.

"As for the eighth: it is part of women's nature to be ungrateful towards their husbands and to deny favours. If you were to be nice to her for her whole life but caused her grief just once, she woulds say, 'I have never seen any good from you'. So don't let this attitude of hers make you dislike her or to run away from her. If you dislike this feature of hers, you will be pleased with some other good qualities she has, so create a balance.[753]

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[753] This is taken from the words of the Prophet ﷺ who said something similar. It is narrated that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said: The Messenger of Allah said: "I was shown the Fire and I have never seen anything more terrifying than it. And I saw that the majority

"As for the ninth: surely there are times when a woman goes through bodily weakness and mental, such that Allah has relieved her of some of her obligatory acts of worship at those times. Allah has excused her from praying during her menstruation cycle and post-natal bleeding. Allah has postponed the days of fasting for her, when she is in this condition, until she regains her health and becomes normal in her temperament once more. Thus, during these days, treat her well. Just as Allah has relieved her of the duties, you should also lessen your demands on her and instructions to her during those days as well.

"As for the tenth: know that a woman is as if your captive. Therefore, have mercy on her and ignore her weaknesses and she will give you pleasure and enjoyment in addition to being a good and peaceful partner."[754]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrated, "A man does not beautify himself with anything better than good manners (*adab*) and a woman does not beautify herself with anything better than fatness (*shaḥm*)."[755]

GOOD MANNERS

Well-mannered is an adjective meaning to have or show good manners or politeness.

Ibn Khālawayh said, "A man does not adorn himself with anything better than good manners nor do women [adorn themselves] with anything better than plumpness."[756]

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of its people are women." They said, "Why, Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Because of their ingratitude (*kufr*)." It was said, "Are they ungrateful to Allah?" He said, "They are ungrateful to their companions (husbands) and ungrateful for good treatment. If you are kind to one of them for a lifetime then she sees one (undesirable) thing in you, she will say, 'I have never had anything good from you.'" al-Bukhārī, 1052.

It is narrated that Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh said, "I attended Eid prayers with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He started with the prayer before the *khuṭbah* (sermon), without *adhān* (call to prayer) or *iqāmah* (final call to prayer). Then he stood up, leaning on Bilāl, speaking of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and urging us to obey Him. He preached to the people and reminded them. Then he went over to the women and preached to them and reminded them. Then he said, 'Give *ṣadaqah*, for you are the majority of the fuel of the Fire.' A woman with dark cheeks stood up in the midst of the women and said, 'Why is that, Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'Because you complain too much and are ungrateful to your husbands.' Then they started to give their jewellery in charity, throwing their earrings and rings into Bilāl's cloak." Muslim, 885

[754] Narrated by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Muḥammad al-Barigawi. Some sources have attributed this counsel to Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal

[755] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 117

[756] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 117

HANDSOMENESS

Handsomeness is used to describe a good-looking man. It is the male equivalent of beauty for women. A good-looking man is highly desirable amongst women, just as a pretty woman is desirable amongst men. Because of this ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb is reported to have said, "Do not give your daughters to ugly or hideous looking men, for they desire of men what men desire of women."

The aforementioned story of the Prophet Joseph ؑ and Zulaykhā, illustrates women's desire for beauty in a man. Al-Kisāʾī reported that Zulaykhā was so astounded by Joseph's beauty that she fell passionately in love with him. She said to him, "How lovely are your words, and how graceful you are!"[757] The Qur'ān also relates that the women in the city were so raptured by Joseph's handsomeness that they cut their fingers with their knives in awe.[758]

Ibn Yaḥyā wrote, "If a beautiful woman makes love to a handsome young man, she would also experience great pleasure. Consequently, that man's pleasure would increase because he knows that he is the source of pleasure for the woman. "[759]

Ibn Falīta related, "The man of letters, Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim ibn Khallād, known as Abū al-ʿAynā', said that he wanted to marry a woman but she rejected him because he was ugly. So he wrote the following verses to her,

> 'I was told that upon seeing me, you showed disapproval
> And said, "Neither in face nor in body is he beautiful."
> If you turn away from my ugly face,
> Know that I am a wise, eloquent man of letters.'
> When she had read the verses, she said angrily,
> 'Go suck your mother's clitoris! Do you think that I want you to be my secretary?!'"[760]

HEIGHT

Studies by psychologists consistently find that women are more attracted to tall men. A study published by Rice University and the University of North Texas in America confirmed this showing that the majority of women prefer men taller than themselves, because they want to feel protected and more feminine.[761]

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[757] Al-Kisā'ī (trans. Wheeler M Thackston Jr.), 1997, p. 174

[758] Yusūf 12: 31

[759] Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, p. 14

[760] Ibn Falīta, 1977, pp. 21-22

HUMILITY

Humility is the quality of being unassuming and not presuming one's own greatness, precedence or importance amongst others. It is the opposite of arrogance and haughtiness, two traits which are greatly detested by women. Humility does not mean abasement or weakness of character. True humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.

HUMOUR

Humour is an aphrodisiac. Women love a man with a sense of humour who can make them smile or laugh. Laughter elicits a positive mood in a woman and relaxes her mind warming her to the man who is making her laugh. A sense of humour makes a man handsome.

INTEGRITY

Integrity is the quality of being honest and being true to oneself. A man of integrity acts and does the right thing even when no one is watching him. It is rare among men, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said when speaking about businessmen, "The truthful trustworthy trader will be in the company of the Prophets, the utterly truthful (*ṣiddiqūn*) and the martyrs."[762]

Women appreciate honesty in a man and may overlook some displeasing qualities that he has as long as they feel that they are not being lied to or betrayed. Integrity is crucial to maintaining a woman's love and respect.

In today's world of political correctness, where many men are afraid to speak the truth or a give an honest opinion about a matter, the few that are bold and courageous to speak honestly and sincerely will gain the admiration of women, even if the women may disagree with what the man is saying. As stated already, women respect and appreciate honesty in a man, particularly in a climate where many men do not speak sincerely about controversial issues out of fear,

It has been said, "Tell the truth and shame the devil."

And, "Honesty is the best policy"

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[761] The study was published in a study entitled "Does Height Matter? An Examination of Height Preferences in Romantic Coupling,"

[762] At-Tirmidhī; ad-Dārimī

And, "The truth is hard to swallow when you are choking on your pride."

INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. Some women find intelligence the most attractive feature in a man. Intellectual magnetism is crucial to stimulating a woman's mind and arousal. A man who can stimulate her mind with thoughtful and intelligent conversations will increase her interest, as women are mental and emotional beings unlike men, who are predominately visual and physical beings.

It is said, "Fatness is desired in women and intelligence is desired in men."[763]

According to Ibn Falīta, women have various degrees of sexual desire and can only be won over by a man who is deep-sighted enough to know her nature.[764] A man who possesses sexual intelligence will be able to meet his partner's desires, as he understands her both emotionally and physically.

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, "With his wife, a man should be [playful] like a child, but when she turns to him for his knowledge, she should find him a man."[765]

JUSTICE

Justice is the quality of being morally right and fair; such an admirable quality is rare amongst men.

Allah instructs men in the Qur'ān, "*Live together with them correctly and courteously.*"[766] Commenting on the *āyat*, Ibn Kathīr said, "'*Live together with them correctly and courteously*' by saying kind words to them, treating them kindly and making your appearance appealing for them as much as you can, just as you appreciate the same from them."[767] In another *āyat*, Allah proclaims, "*Women possess rights similar to those held over them to be honoured with fairness*"[768] which Ibn ʿAbbās said means, "women have the right to good companionship, kind and fair treatment from their husbands, just as they are obliged to obey the commands of their husbands." [769]

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[763] Reported by ar-Riqāshī in *Tuhfat al-ʿurūs*, as-Suyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 118

[764] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 60

[765] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 63

[766] An-Nisā' 4: 19

[767] Ibn Kathīr, p. 454

[768] Al-Baqarah 2: 228

[769] See *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*

KINDNESS

Kindness describe someone having or showing a friendly, generous and considerate nature. A man who is kind and considerate knows how to treat a lady. Women crave kindness as much as any other attractive quality in a man. The best of men are those who are kindest to women, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The most complete of believers in faith is he who has the best character, and the best of you are those who are best in character towards your wives."[770]

> "Be very careful if you make a woman cry, because God counts her tears.
> Woman came out of a man's rib, not from his feet to be walked on,
> Nor from his head to be commanded,
> But from his side, to be his partner in life.
> From under his arm to be protected,
> And next to his heart to be loved by him."[771]

LEADER

A man should be a leader of his woman and not be a pushover. When a woman is in love with a man and trusts his judgement, she will be more than willing to follow his leadership and guidance. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, "Let your wives get used to the word 'No!'"

MANLINESS

Manliness refers to traditional male qualities of being brave, strong, generous and much more. Manliness also refers to the fact of being typically male and masculine.

Gregory David Roberts said, "A man is truly a man when he wins the love of a good woman, earns her respect, and keeps her trust. Until you do that, you're not a man."

Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood said, "What attracts a woman most is man's manliness."[772]

MATURITY

Maturity means being fully developed physically, emotionally and intellectually. For a young person, maturity refers to having reached a stage of mental or emotional development that is characteristic of an adult. You become a man not when you reach a certain age, but when you reach a certain state of mind.

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[770] At-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb al-īmān ʿan rasūl Allāh*, 2612. At-Tirmidhī said the *ḥadīth* is *ḥasan*. Al-Mundhirī, 2993. The *ḥadīth* is regarded as weak by al-Mundhirī' al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 63, al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 53. The tradition related in at-Tirmidhī is said to have rigorously authenticated chain of transmission.

[771] This famous statement is related in various forms. The origin is unknown.

[772] Maqsood, 2009, p. 131

MUSCULAR PHYSIQUE

A muscular man gives the impression that he is strong and is able to protect his woman. The security a muscular man can give a woman by his presence alone is something women crave. There is something magnetic about a man who can make a woman feel safe and protected. Women have an undeniable attraction to muscular men. A muscular man conjures up the thought of sexual aggression and having long lasting sexual stamina, two traits women desire in a sexual partner.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, but there is good in both."[773] Clearly, the first meaning of this noble *hadith* is strength of *īmān*,[774] but there are often other levels of meaning in all of the Prophetic texts and one is unwise to restrict them to the first meaning that occurs to the mind.

The desirability of muscle size varies amongst women; some prefer a lean muscular physique, whilst others prefer a man with a more bulky form. In saying that, the most desired physique appears to be a lean well-cut, chiseled physique.

MYSTERY

Mystery refers to an enigmatic man who is difficult to understand. Beautiful women, who are used to having male admirers, are often intrigued by mysterious men. Often this intrigue later develops into an inexplicable attraction, because such a man is not like the average, who are easily swayed by beautiful women. A mysterious man represents a challenge, which piques female curiosity.

PENIS

The truism, that size does matter, was stated by many erotologists in classic works on what women find attractive in a man.

It has been said, "It's not the size of the boat, it's the motion of the ocean," meaning penis size is not the most important thing to pleasure a woman, rather it is how the man uses his tool to please his women. For effective lovemaking, technique and tenderness is crucial, though many women desire a man who is well-endowed as Ibn Falīta said, "Women have a natural desire for a large penis, but they deny this love out of shyness.[775] The clear evidence for this is in the incident in which ʿĀ'ishāh relates[776] that the wife of Rifaʿāh al-Quraẓī came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "Messenger of Allah! Rifaʿāh divorced me irrevocably. After him I married 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn az-Zubayr al-Quraẓī. He has something similar to the fringe of a garment [i.e. a small penis]." The Messenger of Allah said to her, "Perhaps you want to return to Rifaʿāh? No [you cannot return to Rifa ʿāh] until he tastes your honey, and you taste his honey."[777]

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[773] Muslim, 2664.

[774] Al-Munāwī says in *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, "...strength for the sake of Allah and strong resolve. In praising weakness [what is meant is] gentleness, softheartedness and becoming subdued at witnessing the majesty of the All-Compelling One."

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "For a woman, the man of quality has a large, hard and vigorous penis, quick to rise in the ache of its desire and slow to spend its passion. For intercourse, a woman enjoys a man who gives and takes his pleasure slowly, with gentle breast and heavy haunches, a man of size whose penis reaches deep within her vagina, to stretch her and to fill her, a man who is slow to come and quick to arousal again. Such a man is a woman's pleasure. A poet said:

Women desire what in men cannot last,
Youth, wealth and health, and not coming too fast.
Long-lasting and slow is what women expect
And for seconds, he's equally quick to erect.
Well-endowed, heavy-haunched with a light, gentle breast,
The man who has these, among women, is blessed."[778]

POWERFUL

Power is defined as the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events. Described as the greatest aphrodisiac, women have an innate desire for male leadership and tend to gravitate towards powerful men.

PROTECTIVE

A protective man keeps his woman safe from harm or danger. A real man takes pride in being a provider, protector, defender, adviser, intense lover, and teacher to his lady. A Ghanian proverb has it, "A woman is a flower in a garden, her husband is the fence around it."

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[775] Although a large penis is generally preferred amongst women, some, research has shown that penis width may be a greater factor for achieving female sexual satisfaction and not penis length.

[776] Ibn Muhammad al-Yemini, 2006, p. 33

[777] Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*; 1433 b, an-Nasā'ī , *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3283; at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1118

[778] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, p.6

It has been said;

A woman wants a man who can protect her like a daughter, love her like a wife, and respect her like his mother.

ROMANTIC

Romance is the feeling of excitement and mystery associated with love. A romantic is a man who has the ability to do and say things that convey his love for his beloved. A man who is romantically creative, uses his imagination to woo his woman from time to time, whether by surprising her with a gift or other acts of spontaneity.

It is said, "There is no better feeling than making love to the woman that I love."

RESPECT

Respect is a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something that is elicited by their abilities, qualities or achievements. Women love a respectful and respected man.

It has been said, that "If she does not respect you, she will replace you."

And the English proverb has it that, 'A good husband makes a good wife,' meaning if a man is respectful and loving to his woman, she will be respectful and loving to him.

Nevertheless, although showing respect to others is of great merit, respectability is not in itself a noted value for Muslims. Al-Bukhārī narrated, "A man passed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Prophet ﷺ asked a man sitting beside him, 'What is your opinion about this one?' He replied, 'This one is from the noble class of people. By Allah, if he should ask for a lady's hand in marriage, he ought to be given her in marriage, and if he intercedes for somebody, his intercession will be accepted.' The Messenger of Allah ﷺ kept quiet. Then another man passed by and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked the same man again, 'What is your opinion about this one?' He said, 'Messenger of Allah! This person is one of the poor Muslims. If he should ask a lady's hand in marriage, no one will accept him, and if he intercedes for somebody, no one will accept his intercession, and if he talks, no one will listen to his words.'

Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'This one is better than the earth full of the other.'"[779]

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[779] Al-Bukhārī, 6447

SELFLESSNESS

Selflessness in this context is that of a man determined to ensure that his wife's desires, both psychological and physical, are fulfilled before his own.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "When a man has sex with his wife, he should strive to satisfy her. Then, when he fulfils his need, he should not hurry [in withdrawing] until she fulfils her need."[780]

SEXUAL AGGRESSION

Many women enjoy a dominant and sexually aggressive male. The type of sexual aggression which women desire in men is not violent or forceful. Sexual aggression, also known as 'rough sex', includes: biting, light spanking, making love against a wall, hard penetrative thrusts, forceful grabbing and holding. Women tend to find aggressive and animalistic men more attractive than timid lovers. The man whom women desire has the heart of a lion, is strong as an ox and is hung like a horse. A man who is well-versed in the ancient sexual knowledge of the Indians, possesses the eloquence of the early Arabs and has the sexual passion of a traditional Mandingo warrior!

Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood says, "Most women rather like their men to be dominant [in bed], so long as they know they will not be forced to do anything they would not wish to do. Many wives enjoy quite 'rough' sexplay, being 'forced' (in a pretence situation) to comply with a husband's wishes - it can be quite flattering! Some even enjoy being spanked if 'naughty.' However, remember that other woman would not like this at all."[781]

SEXUAL MASTERY

A man who has achieved sexual mastery will have attained comprehensive knowledge and skill in the art of coition, which includes: mental, emotional, verbal and physical foreplay, oral stimulation and penetrative intercourse. To become a skilful lover, he must be sexually versatile and possess a great amount of self-control in order to heighten his wife's sexual experience.

A Nigerian proverb has it that, "A woman is like a horse. He who can drive her is her master."

Ibn Falīta related: "There was a guest of a certain tribe. In one of the tents the guest saw an extremely beautiful woman with a hideously ugly

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780 Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153, Al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 92 Recorded by Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī in his *Musnad*, 4201, and *al-Mugnī* by Ibn Qudāmah

781 Maqsood, 2009, p. 157

man coming in and out of the tent giving her orders and instructions. The guest asked the woman, 'Who is that man to you?' She told him that the man was her husband and then asked him why he asked about him. The guest said, 'I felt sorry that a beautiful woman like you ended up with someone as ugly as him.' The woman replied, 'By Allah! If you experienced the same pleasure that I experience when he makes love to me you would have the greatest esteem and admiration for him!'"[782]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī narrated, "Mub'abbirah, reckoned to be the most worldly-wise woman of her day, was once asked, 'Where is a woman's reason located?' 'Between her legs,' she replied. 'And her pleasure?' She was asked. 'In the same place,' she answered. 'And her love or loathing for a man?' She said, 'Inside her vagina. If a woman loves a man, she will give him her vagina unreservedly but if she dislikes him, she will deny him. A woman will do all that she can for the man she loves and try to satisfy him in every possible way, no matter how trivial. She accepts him as he is, even if he is penniless. But if a woman dislikes a man, she will keep him at a distance, no matter how rich he would make her.' The questioner asked, 'And where is the place of a woman's perception, her passion and discernment?' She answered, 'In her eye, her heart and her vagina.' He asked, 'Would you explain that?' She said, 'Perception resides in the eye, passion in the heart and discernment, or taste, in the vagina. If a woman's eye spots a handsome man and is pleased by what it sees then affection and desire will penetrate her heart and passion, too, may find dwelling there. The woman tracks the man of her desire and sets traps for him. If she succeeds and makes sexual contact, her vagina tastes him and her taste discerns his sweetness or his bile. A woman's discernment is in her vagina and there, by taste, she knows the good man from the bad.'"[783]

SMILE

A smile beautifies the face and makes a person more attractive. Smiling is a sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who was known to smile often. ʿAbdullāh ibn Ḥārith said, "I never came across a person who smiled as much as the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ."[784]

SPONTANEITY

Being spontaneous means having an open, natural and uninhibited manner. Spontaneity is the opposite of predictability and being boring.

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[782] Ibn Muhammad al-Yemini, 2006, p. 34

[783] An-Nafzāwī, (translated by Jim Colville) 1999, p. 63

[784] At-Tirmidhī, 3641

Spontaneous men are intriguing and exciting, which increases a woman's desire.

STAMINA

Stamina refers to the ability to sustain prolonged sexual performance.

Ibn Falīta said, "[Women like a man] who is capable of delaying ejaculation long enough for her to achieve sexual climax."[785]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said, "The man who is most beloved to women is the one who has the greatest sexual stamina."[786]

STATUS

Women value the social status of a man when selecting a sexual partner. A man of high social status is generally preferred amongst women, even if he has less physical attractiveness. When a man is highly desired by women, he becomes more attractive in the eyes of others who may not previously have been attracted to him. The taming process is a great challenge for women, as the more desired a man is, the greater the accomplishment that is felt when a woman attains him. The well-known African-American entrepreneur and recording artist, Curtis '50 Cent' Jackson said about this phenomenon, "A man isn't as attractive as an attractive woman until he is successful and publicly noted."

SWEET-TALK

The sweet-talker is also referred to as a 'smooth-talker' or a 'flirt.' A sweet-talker is a man who is charming and confident in his use of wordplay. He has the ability to speak in an assured and seductive manner in order to gain the sexual favours of women. A smooth-talker knows how, by his words alone, to make his woman feel desired, loved and beautiful. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged men to make use of sweet words prior to intercourse, as it is something which is beloved to women, when he said, "One of you should not fulfil his need with his wife like an animal, rather there should be foreplay of kissing and sweet words between them."[787]

It is rightly said that, "A sweet tongue attracts a sweet woman."

Making a woman feel desirable gives her a sense of security and boosts her confidence. A man who is able to do this, will be able to attain her sexual favours and love, even if he is lacking in other areas such as wealth or physical attractiveness, as the following Yoruba proverb makes clear,

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[785] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 29

[786] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 236

[787] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 154 and 259, ad-Daylamī, *Musnad al-Firdaws*, 2/55.

"If one lacks money, one should have people; if one lacks people, one should be pleasant in one's speech."[788]

SUCCESS

Success is the attainment of fame, wealth or social status. Success arouses desires in women that were not present prior to that man attaining standing. It is not uncommon for women to become attracted to a man once he becomes successful.

Napoleon Hill aptly sums it up, "Success attracts success and failure attracts failure, because of the law of harmonious attraction."

TENDERNESS

Tenderness refers to the quality of being gentle, loving, or kind. For women, consistent tenderness is important for sexual fulfilment and is equally essential for a harmonious relationship. The female need for being a sweetheart often goes unnoticed by many men, which makes it all the more heart-breaking for her and disastrous for the relationship. It is part of a woman's *fitrah* (natural disposition) to be sensitive and emotional, thus requiring a man who not only understands this but can play with her in a gentle and loving manner.[789]

WEALTH

Wealth is an abundance of property, crops, livestock, valuable possessions or money. Women are desirous of rich and wealthy men, even though many outwardly deny this love. Wealth can make a man appear more attractive to women, even if his physical appearance is not attractive. A man with money provides something that all women crave – financial security and stability.

Ibn Yaḥyā says, "A man cannot gain the love of a woman without money. If he tries to gain her love only through sexual union she will turn to somebody else. However, money should be combined with a man's sexual capacity."[790]

A Yoruba proverb has it that one should, "Limit how often you take a bath; it is wealth that grooms a person" meaning wealth beautifies more efficiently than a lot of grooming.[791]

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[788] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 277

[789] Hartford, 2007, pp. 152-156

[790] Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, p. 90

[791] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 280

Another Yoruba proverb says, "Only money is hard to come by; a wife is not hard to come by" meaning that if one has money, finding a wife is a simple matter.[792]

The Prophet ﷺ said about the desirability of acquiring wealth gainfully rather than sitting passively and asking others, "By Him in Whose Hand my self is, it is better for any of you to take a rope and cut wood (from the forest), carry it on his back and sell it (as a means of earning his living) rather than to ask a person for something, and that person may or may not give him."[793]

He ﷺ also said, "This worldly wealth is sweet and if a person earns it in a legal way and spends it properly, then it is an excellent helper. Whoever earns it in an illegal way, will be like someone who eats but is never satisfied."[794]

Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām narrated, "I asked the Prophet [for some money] and he gave me. I asked him again and he gave me. Then again I asked him and he gave me but said, 'This wealth is [like] green and sweet [fruit], so whoever takes it lawfully then it will be blessed for him. Whoever takes it with greed, it will not be blessed for him. He will be like someone who eats but is never satisfied. And the upper hand is better than the lower hand.'

VOICE

A deep, controlled, baritone voice is extremely attractive to women.

As has been said, "It is not what you say, it is how you say it."

VIRILITY

Virility is the description of a man with a strong sex drive.

Ibn Falīta related, "A man proposed to a woman who was so difficult that she imposed many conditions upon him. To persuade her to accept him, he said, 'I have certain faults which if you can put up with, I will accept all of your conditions [and marry you].' His words aroused her curiosity and she quickly asked what those faults of his were. He said, 'I have a greedy appetite for sexual intercourse, am quick to erection but slow in ejaculation.' Hearing his words she called her female slave to call the people to bear witness of her marriage to the man upon the blessing of Allah."[795] In other words, she abandoned all her conditions.

Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib narrated, "When Bunyan Dakht was asked to de-

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792 Owomoyela, 2005, p. 287

793 Al-Bukhārī

794 Al-Bukhārī, 6427

795 Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 22

scribe the physiognomy of a man who had great capacity for sexual union, she said, 'If he is young, handsome, moderately big and tall, brownish in complexion, soft-skinned, black bearded and black haired, with a big penis whose veins can be seen, I say such a man has a great capacity for sexual union and too much seminal fluid which he can ejaculate to a distance. Such a man can butt a vagina with his penis like a ram, can fill all the corners of the vagina therewith, can penetrate his glans penis forcefully and can make his penis stand erect so that it may touch his belly and, because of its erection, he will have to take it in his hand so that he may thrust it through the vagina.'"[796]

VIRTUE

Virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to carry out good acts. Virtue gives men a blueprint for being true and honourable. Indeed, the very term virtue comes from the Latin word for man, male and masculine, *vir*. For the ancients, to be manly was to be virtuous. Similarly in Arabic the word *mar'* (man) is derived from the word *murū'ah* which means manliness, virtue and chivalry. Virtues are habits that give men the power to act in a manly way, with strength sufficient to do what is right. Thus in essence to be a real man is to be virtuous.

Detestable Qualities

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The most wicked among the people in the eyes of Allah on the Day of Judgement is the man who goes to his wife and she comes to him, and then he divulges her secret."[797]

BAD CHARACTER

Bad character refers to having poor or negative qualities of character. Where good character comprises generosity, patience, equanimity and kindness, for example, bad character involves stinginess, irascibility, discontent and meanness.

'Ā'ishah narrated that, "Eleven women sat and promised each other and agreed that they would not conceal anything about their husbands.

"The first said, 'My husband resembles the meat of an emaciated camel on the top of a mountain, where the way up is neither easy, so that it can be climbed, nor is the meat fat so that people would bother to transport it.'

"The second said, 'I do not have enough time to recount everything about my husband. I fear that I would not leave anything out if I mention him, but would mention all his faults, outward and inward.'

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[796] Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, p. 198.

[797] Muslim

"The third said, 'My husband is tall and of bad character. If I speak, he will divorce me. If I am silent, I am left hanging.'

"The fourth said, 'My husband is like the night of Tihāma, neither hot nor cold. I do not fear him nor am I annoyed with him.'

"The fifth said, 'My husband is like a leopard when he comes in and a lion when he goes out. He does not ask about the state of things.'

"The sixth said, 'If my husband eats, he eats too much and leaves nothing. If he drinks, he leaves nothing. If he goes to sleep, he wraps himself in his garment away from me and does not stretch his hands out to see how I am.'

"The seventh said, 'My husband is ponderous in spirit or impotent and utterly stupid. He has every possible fault. He may injure your head or your body or both.'

"The eighth said, 'My husband is soft to touch like a rabbit and smells sweet like citron.'

"The ninth said, 'My husband is a generous noble man, tall – wearing a long sword strap having heaps of ashes [at his door an indication of generosity] and his house is near the meeting place where people seek his advice.'

"The tenth said, 'My husband is Mālik. What can be said about Mālik? Mālik is better than that. He has camels, most of which are kept in pens while only a few are sent to graze. When they hear the sound of the lute, they are certain that they will be slaughtered.'

"The eleventh said, 'My husband is Abū Zarᶜ. What can be said about Abū Zarᶜ? He has made my ears dangle with jewellery and filled out the flesh of my arms. He delights me and makes me feel superior. He found me in hardship with a people of a few sheep and placed me in a family of horses and camels, oxen for ploughing and crops. When I speak, he does not rebuke me. When I sleep, I sleep until morning. When I drink, I drink to my fill. The mother of Abū Zarᶜ; what can be said about the mother of Abū Zarᶜ? Her containers are huge and her house is spacious. The son of Abū Zarᶜ; what can be said about the son of Abū Zarᶜ? His bed is like a narrow unsheathed sword and the shoulder of a lamb satisfies him. The daughter of Abū Zarᶜ; what can be said about the daughter of Abū Zarᶜ? She obeys her father and obeys her mother. She fills out her garment and infuriates her co-wife. The slavegirl of Abū Zarᶜ; what can be said about the slave-girl of Abū Zarᶜ? She does not gossip about what we say and does not waste our provisions. She does not fill our house with dishonesty.' She said, 'Abū Zarᶜ went out when butter was being churned and he came across a woman who had two sons like leopards below her waist, playing with her breasts. He divorced me and married her. After him I married a noble man who rode a fast, tireless horse and a spear of al-Khaṭṭ. He gave me a lot of livestock and gave me a pair of every kind. He said, "Eat, Umm Zarᶜ, and feed your family."' She said, 'If all that he gave were collected, it would not reach the smallest vessel of Abū Zarᶜ.'" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then said to ᶜĀ'ishah, "I am to you as Abū Zarᶜ was to Umm Zarᶜ."[798]

In another narration the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, " ᶜĀ'ishah! I am to you like Abū Zarᶜ was to Umm Zarᶜ – except that Abū Zarᶜ divorced (her), and I will not divorce you" to which ᶜĀ'ishah replied, "Messenger of Allah! You are better to me than Abū Zarᶜ was to Umm Zarᶜ!'"[799]

CUCKOLD

A cuckold (*dayyūth*) is the husband of an adulterous wife. Such a man lacks protective jealousy (*ghīrah*) for his wife and does not disapprove of her unfaithfulness.

> The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "There are three at whom Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will not look on the Day of Rising: the one who is defiant towards his parents, the woman who imitates men and the cuckold (*dayyūth*)."[800]

THE DECEITFUL PHILANDERER

Deceit is the action or practice of deceiving someone by concealing or misrepresenting the truth. A philanderer, also known as a womaniser, is a man who has numerous casual sexual relationships with women. Often a womaniser loves the chase and the thrill of seduction, but soon becomes bored with his conquest. Although many women are intrigued by the ability of successful philanderers to seduce beautiful women, they are disheartened by the deceit that is often involved in gaining their sexual favours.

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[798] Al-*Bukhārī, Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5189

[799] Shamāil at-Tirmidhī with the commentary of Shaykh al-Ḥadīth Maulana Muḥammad Zakariyya Kandhelvi, nawwarallahu marqadahu, English translation: pg. 244-251

[800] An-Nasā'ī, 2562

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "Despicable is the man who is false in his words, who does not fulfil the promise he has made, who never speaks without telling lies, and who conceals all his doings from his wife, except his adulterous exploits. Women cannot esteem such men, as they cannot procure them any enjoyment."[801]

THE EFFEMINATE

Effeminacy refers to a man having unmanly or feminine characteristics.

Ibn Abbās reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Allah has cursed men who make themselves look like women and women who make themselves look like men."[802]

And he ﷺ said, "Allah has cursed a man who wears women's clothes and a woman who wear men's clothes."[803]

THE EXCESSIVELY JEALOUS

Excessive jealousy is an excessive amount of resentful suspicion that one's partner is attracted to, or sexually involved with someone else. The Prophet ﷺ forbade the "pursuit of woman's private parts" (i.e. catching woman unawares). Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ﵁ said, "Do not be so suspicious of your wife that you get her a bad reputation."[804]

Ibn Yaḥyā said, "A man should not be unreasonably jealous for he would then drive his wife to be corrupt. However if he sees that she is corrupt or is in love with someone else, it is better that he divorces her, as it is the best remedy."[805]

Ibn Yaḥyā's advice is in line with the advice of the Prophet ﷺ. Ibn ʿAbbās ﵁ narrated, "A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, 'My wife is the most beloved person to me but she does not reject the hand of any man who touches her.' The Prophet ﷺ said, '[Then] divorce her!' The man then said, 'I cannot do without her.' The Prophet ﷺ replied, 'Then enjoy her!'"[806]

THE IMPOTENT

Impotence refers to the inability to achieve an erection or an orgasm.

Ibn Falīta said, "Women prefer a grey-haired but potent man to a young but impotent man. There are, however, men who, wanting to

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801 Sheikh Nefzaoui (translated by Richard Burton), 2010, p. 41

802 Al-Bukhārī

803 Abū Dāwūd, 4095

804 Al-Ghazali, 2007, p. 66

805 Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, p. 73

806 An-Nasāʾī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3229; Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 2044

attract women and appear young in their eyes, resort to hair dyes which they believe can restore youth, but they forget that women can see through these tricks."[807]

ODOUR

Odour is a distinctive unpleasant smell.

Ibn Falīta said, "Women hold bad breath and unpleasant armpit odour in abhorrence and consequently hate men who have bad odours. They will refuse to have intercourse with such men. Therefore a man should get rid of these [bad] odours by washing and perfuming himself. He should not be deceived by her seeming tolerance of such disadvantages of his, for when a woman gets angry, she loses control over her feelings and faces him with his defects, which she had patiently bore."

BEING OVERWEIGHT

When the Prophet ﷺ saw a fat man he pointed at his stomach and said, "If this was something other than this, it would be better for you."[808]

THE SEXUALLY INCOMPETENT

This refers to the inability to perform sexual acts effectively.

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said,"The kind of man who is repulsive to women is of shabby appearance, ugly to look at and has a small, limp and weedy penis. He is the type who, when he comes to a woman, has no idea how to treat her properly but mounts her without kissing or caressing her, without any sort of foreplay at all. He inserts his flaccid little thing inside her only with the greatest difficulty, jerks once or twice then hauls himself off her, taking longer to do so than he did on the job. His penis then shrivels up and away he goes. He has been described as slow to erect and quick to eject, with a small penis, leaden chest and lightweight buttocks. A man like that is no use to a woman."[809]

THE SEXUAL SCAVENGER

A scavenger is an animal that feeds on carrion, dead plant material, or refuse. It can also refer to a person who searches for and collects discarded items. A sexual scavenger is a man who tries to sleep with every woman who arouses his sexual desire. Sexual scavengers usually have low standards and lack self-restraint.

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[807] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 34

[808] Aḥmad; Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, 2007, p. 739

[809] An-Nafzāwī (translated by Jim Colville), 1999, p. 31

A SMALL PENIS

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "It is said that a man by the name of Abbes, whose member was extremely small and slight, had a very corpulent wife, whom he could not contrive to satisfy in coition. She then started to complain to her female friends about this. The woman possessed a considerable fortune, whilst Abbes was extremely poor and when he wanted anything, she was sure not to let him have what he wanted. One day he went to see a wise man, and submitted his case to him. The sage said to him, 'If you had a fine penis you might dispose of her fortune. Do you not know that women's discernment lies in their vulvas? But I will prescribe you a remedy which will do away with your troubles.' Abbes lost no time in making up the remedy according to the recipe of the wise man, and after he had used it his member grew to be long and thick. When his wife saw it in that state she was surprised; but it was still better when he made her feel quite another thing in the matter of enjoyment than she had been accustomed to experience; he began in fact to work her with his tool in quite a remarkable manner, to such a point that she trembled and sighed and sobbed and cried out during the operation. As soon as the wife found such eminently good qualities in her husband she gave him her fortune, and she placed her person and all she had at his disposal."[810]

Ibn Falīta said, "Women hate a man who has a drooping penis. For them such a penis is like a sausage because it is bendable."

VIOLENCE

Violence is behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "How does any of you beat his wife in the same way as he beats a stallion camel and then he embrace [i.e. sleep with] her?"[811] The Prophet ﷺ displayed astonishment at a man who mistreats his wife and then has the audacity to engage in sexual relations with her. After all, how can a man treat his wife harshly and aggressively and then expect her to be responsive to his sexual advances? Muhammad al-Kawtharī advises, "Muslim husbands really must take heed of this. Some men, outside of the bedroom, fail to treat their women with warmth and affection but when it comes to sex, all of a sudden, they become caring and compassionate. Not only is this selfish, It also shows what the wife actually means to the husband." Al-Kawtharī concludes, "The Sunna is to precede sexual relations with tenderness and affection. The husband should use the appropriate means to seduce his wife, through his words and actions. In this way, the wife will also be extremely receptive to his sexual advances."[812]

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[810] Sheikh Nefzaoui (translated by Richard Burton), 2010, pp. 41-42

[811] Al-Bukhārī

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[812] Al-Kawtharī, 2008, pp. 54-55

CHAPTER 11

The Woman of Quality

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The best of women is the one who, when you look at her, makes you happy."[813]

GIVEN THE FACT that men prize beautiful women highly, it is not surprising that there is a plethora of literary works dedicated to the 'beauties of women' (*jamāl an-nisā'*) in the male-dominated Arab-Muslim erotological tradition. Every woman is different in her own special way. Some are bountifully large, whilst others are lovely and slender. Due to the great variety of female beauty, erotologists enumerated in great detail the desirable qualities that men should seek in a female sexual partner[814] and the less desirable aspects they should avoid. A summary of these qualities makes up this chapter.

Desirable Qualities

AFFECTION

Affection is showing fondness or tenderness.
The Prophet ﷺ advised, "Marry affectionate and fruitful women."[815]

AMOROUSNESS

Derived from the Latin word *amor* (love), amorousness is the feeling or showing of sexual desire. An amorous woman is sensual and enjoys having sex on a regular basis.

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[813] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 53, See aṭ-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*,

[814] A sexual partner is either by way of marriage or previously by concubinage

[815] Aḥmad; Abū Dāwūd

Ibn Falīta narrated, "A sage was once asked to describe the type of woman whom men desire most, to which he answered, 'A woman whom you do not want to leave and to whom you return with a heart filled with burning passion.'"[816]

Ibn Qutayba said, "The more a woman feels desire, the more she will be desired."

Al-Jāḥiz relates, "Ṭalhah's daughter ʿĀ'ishah, a many time divorcee, married ʿUmar ibn ʿUbaydillāh ibn Muʿammar at-Taymī. One day, while she was sitting chatting with a visitor, her husband came home and called for her. As the two of them went at it, the woman heard what sounded like the neighing of a horse and the braying of a donkey, coming from the bedroom. When ʿĀ'ishah returned, she asked her, 'How can a woman like you, of rank and class, make a noise like that?' She said, 'A camel can't quench its thirst unless it slurps!'"[817]

BEAUTY

Beauty refers to the quality of being pleasing to the eye, mind and/or heart. Female beauty delights the eye and gives pleasure to the heart. Beauty of countenance is highly desirable as it is conducive to chastity, since a man's nature is not usually content with an ugly woman.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The best of women is the one who, when you look at her, makes you happy."[818]

Ibn Falīta narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Women are [like] toys, so whoever wants to take a toy, he should take the [most] beautiful one."[819]

Al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʿbah narrated, "I proposed marriage to a woman, and Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked, "Have you seen her?" I said, "No." He said, "Look at her, because it is more likely to establish love and compatibility between you.'"

Ibn Falīta said, "The noblest of women are those with the most beautiful faces and those content with the cheapest dowries."[820]

Ibn Yaḥyā said, "Because making love is the most perfect form of relation between men and women, since it demonstrates both an inward and an outward contact of the body, it is desirable to make love with beautiful women. On the other hand since the pleasure of making love is a temporary pleasure, many people resort to other ways of demonstrating their love such as embracing, kissing, smelling, flirting and entertaining, in which they experience greater pleasure. It is not absurd to engage in sex-play with an ugly woman. A man who does so is only lustful or has such an accumulation of seminal fluid that he gets as excited as an animal.""[821]

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[816] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 11; *Muḥāḍarat al-udabā'*, vol.3, p. 202

[817] Al-Jāḥiẓ, 2002, p. 223

[818] Aḥmad; an-Nasāʾī; al-Ḥākim

[819] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 16

[820] "This *ḥadīth* was attributed to the Prophet ﷺ, but it doesn't appear to be present in any of the *ḥadīth* books." Mentioned in footnotes of book by Ibn Muhammad al-Yemini, 2006, p. 16

Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib related:

A woman is loved and praised for having the 'four qualities':

1 Four black things: [namely her] hair, eyelashes, eyebrows and eyes
2 Four white things: skin complexion, whiteness of the eyes, teeth and armpit
3 Four red things: tongue, lips, cheeks and buttocks
4 Four round things: face, eyes, heels and ankles
5 Four long things: neck, hair, eyebrows and fingers
6 Four broad things: forehead, chest, hips and eyes
7 Four sweet-smelling things: nose, mouth, armpits and vulva
8 Four narrow things: nostrils, ears, navel and vagina
9 Four small things: mouth, nose, hands and feet
10 Four thin things: eyebrows, nose, fingers and lips[822]

Ibn Falīta added some more qualities in his narration of the 'four qualities':

From amongst what are regarded as the beauties of a woman there are four things that are:

1 Long: limbs, build, hair and neck
2 [Metaphorically] short: hands,[823] feet,[824] tongue[825] and eyes[826]
3 White: skin complexion, the parting of her hair, teeth, and the whiteness of the eyes
4 Black: eyelashes, eyebrows, pupils and hair
5 Rosy red: tongue, lips, cheek and complexion
6 Slim: nose, fingertips, waist, and feet
7 Big: breasts, calves, wrists and buttocks
8 Wide: forehead, face, eyes and chest

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[821] Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, p. 14

[822] Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, pp. 205-206; Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 50

[823] She doesn't spend from the house of her husband.

[824] She doesn't leave her husband's house

[825] She doesn't talk a lot.

[826] She doesn't desire anyone other than her husband.

9 Narrow: mouth, nostril, earholes and vagina[827]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrated from some Persian kings that among the 'four qualities' are:

1 Four black things: [namely her] hair, eyebrows, eyelashes and pupils
2 Four white things: skin complexion, whiteness of the eyes, teeth and toe nails that are not painted
3 Four red things: cheeks, lips, tongue and gums
4 Four big things; breasts, vulva, buttocks and knees
5 Four wide things; forehead, eyes, breasts and navel
6 Four tight things; nostrils, ear lobes, hips and vagina[828]

Al-Ghazālī narrated, "A wife should be beneath her husband in four things or else she will despise him: age, height, wealth and lineage. She should be better than him in four others: beauty, manners, character and scrupulousness in matters of religion."[829]

A Yoruba proverb has it that:

"Sifted cassava grits are sweet by themselves;
sugar is simply strutting for nothing"

meaning that natural endowments (i.e. natural beauty) need no validation or acknowledgement by detractors.[830]

THE BODY

The body is an important quality many men seek in a woman. Since women's bodies occur in a range of shapes and sizes, some men like a number of different female physical forms. Desirable female body shapes are typically narrower at the waist than the breasts and hips. Studies have broken down the analysis of what makes a perfectly shaped body into body mass index (BMI), waist/hip ratio (WHR)[831], waist/bust ratio and body weight. The 'hourglass' figure is often spoken of as the most desirable female shape, though there are some men who prefer very large women and others who prefer a woman with a more slender frame.

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[827] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 50

[828] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 115

[829] Al-Ghazālī, 2009, p. 177

[830] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 482

[831] The circumference of the waist compared to the circumference of the hip.

Al-Jāḥiz said, "A woman should have a good figure, finely chiselled features, a straight back and shoulders. She should have enough flesh on her bones not to be skinny but neither should she be fat."[832]

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba said, "The body of a woman is a microcosm of the masterly work of Allah. To lose oneself in it is to find oneself in Allah."[833]

Ibn Yaḥyā said, "[The ideal woman has] a well-developed body, a smooth complexion, thick hair, a bright face that looks beautiful without beautification, long thin eyebrows, wide black eyes, long eyelashes, a high and a curved nose-tip, pleasant mouth odour, bright teeth, a long and a well-developed neck, well-proportioned arms and forearms, a slender waist, broad hips, big buttocks, well-developed legs, a sweet voice, cheerfulness, gentleness, modesty, chastity, devotion, cleverness at handwork and she should be fertile."[834]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "There are many different types of women, some of whom are attractive and desirable to men and some of whom are not. For a man, the woman of quality has a full and voluptuous figure, jet-black hair, a broad forehead, arched eyebrows and wide, clear eyes, a moon-shaped face, smooth, soft cheeks, a straight nose and narrow mouth, sweet breath, red lips and a pink tongue. She has a long neck and full throat, broad shoulders and chest with large, firm breasts and a deep cleavage, a neat waist and curved belly with a wide, deep navel, a generous vulva, a soft, tight vagina without discharge or odour – and hot – as if almost on fire – broad hips, firm, ample buttocks, tight curves, strong firm thighs, long shapely legs, graceful feet, broad arms and elegant hands. As she walks towards you, she entrances you and when she turns around, she's fatal. When she sits, her vulva pouts like a little cupola; lying down, it flutters like a flag does in a gentle breeze and when she stands, it stands majestic like a sceptre.

"She will not be given to much laughter or frivolous talk nor to much coming and going to the houses of neighbours [with whom she will, in any case, have few dealings]. She will not seek the close friendship of other women but will be at ease with and put her trust in her husband alone. She will eat only at his table or at that of close relatives, if she has any. She will not behave secretively towards her husband, nor betray a confidence, nor will she deceive him. If her husband calls her to bed, she will obey him by preceding him. She will help him in all manner of things. She will complain little, neither will she cause offence. She will relax and laugh only in the intimacy of her husband's company and will give herself to him alone, even though she were to die of forbearance."[835]

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[832] Al-Jāḥiẓ

[833] Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 135

[834] Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008

BREASTS

Buxom (*kāʿib*) and full-breasted (*nāhid*) women are highly desirable, as as-Ṣuyuṭī reported.[836] The Qur'ān describes the women of the Garden as having large bosoms. Large breasts are also a sign of a high level of oestrogen.

Ibn Falīta said, "A woman whose breasts are close to each other and which heave when she walks [is highly desired]."[837]

The Yoruba proverb has it that, "Whiteness is the pride of the teeth, straightness is the pride of the neck, and pointed breasts are the pride of a woman."[838]

BUTTOCKS

The derriere is a recurring feature in Arab and African discourse on female beauty. A firm, well-rounded, protruding behind is frequently mentioned as being most desirable. Pre-Islamic Arab poets used to refer to women metaphorically as cows as a form of praise, because from behind the slow, seductive gait of a woman with large buttocks resembles the nonchalant stroll of a cow. Many traditional erotologists lauded women of African descent in particular, who were renowned for their large posteriors. In *Tuhfat al-ʿurūs* Khālid ibn Ṣafwān said, "The best of women when embraced are those with empty stomachs, large buttocks and large breasts."[839]

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "Choose wisely for your seed, and choose carefully for your marriages; choose women with hips (*awrāk*), for they are the most magnanimous."[840]

CHASTITY

A person who abstains from extramarital affairs is described as being chaste.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked by a man, "Which women are the best?" He ﷺ replied, "Those whose appearance delights you, who obey your command, guard your wealth and their private parts."[841]

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[835] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, p. 18

[836] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, pp. 150-151

[837] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 50

[838] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 482

[839] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 119

[840] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 118

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ said, "The best of women are those who are chaste and who are passionate lovers to their husbands."[842]

Khālid ibn Ṣafwān said, "The best women protect themselves (*ḥiṣān*) from their neighbours but are brazen (*mājinah*) with their husbands."[843]

CONFIDENT

Confidence is a feeling of self-assurance arising from an appreciation of one's own God-given abilities or qualities.

It is said, "There is nothing more attractive in a woman than confidence. Once she sees her own beauty, everyone else will."

And also, "Keep your standards even when everyone around you is losing theirs."

DIMPLE

A dimple is a small indentation in the flesh that forms in the cheek when one smiles.

ELEGANCE

Elegance is defined as being graceful and stylish in appearance or manner. An elegant woman is a lady of class, charm and sophistication. Indeed elegance is timeless and such a woman is forever adored and respected.

It has been said, "Elegance is not about being noticed, it's about being remembered."

And, "Every lady is a woman but not every woman is a lady."

EYES

In the Qur'ān Allah speaks at length of the women of the Garden having luxurious large dark eyes. According to some studies, research has shown that men generally find larger eyes in women more attractive. The perceived attractiveness of larger eyes seems to be due to two reasons: larger eyes are a sign of higher levels of oestrogen and large eyes are a neotenous feature, i.e. a characteristic of youth shared by babies and children. Since the perceived youth of a mate is also a sign of fertility, men tend to desire women with neotenous features such as large eyes. A woman with 'bedroom eyes' is also highly seductive and desirable.[844]

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[841] Aḥmad; an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3231

[842] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 41

[843] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 146

[844] 'Bedroom eyes' refers to heavy-lidded or half-shut eyes, which are reminiscent of the hazy dreamy look shared by couples during intimate moments. The term is sometimes used to describe the moment when a person looks at another with sexual

It has been said, "The beauty of a woman must be seen in her eyes, because that is the doorway to her heart, the place where love resides."

And, "Observe the eyes, for they are the windows to the soul."

FACE

Women with symmetrical faces are considered to have more feminine facial proportions, and such feminine features are considered to be more attractive, according to some studies. Feminine features are empirically linked to higher levels of oestrogen in women. In saying this, 'familiar' or 'typical' faces are also viewed as more attractive amongst some men. A pretty face is highly desirable amongst men as the face is considered the crown of beauty.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The best of women is the one who, when you look at her, makes you happy."[845]

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "The best of wives are those with the prettiest faces, and whose dowers are least expensive,"[846]

Ibn Falīta said, "A well-proportioned [pretty] face is the most desirable quality of a woman, as it is a storehouse of her beauty."

Ibn Yaḥyā said, "Besides being an embodiment of a wonderful creation, beautiful faces have that proportion which is found in a piece of music. Their different parts have different colours whose beauty is increased by their contrast. What is really wonderful about beautiful faces is that they have charm and an attraction. If such extraordinary beauty is accompanied by grace, good manners and a sweet voice, it doubles the charm. Moreover, sociability, intelligence, eloquence and an ability to give witty answers will make a woman of such qualities unquestionably attractive.

"Beautiful faces are the most wonderful thing on earth. 'Looking at beautiful faces is like an act of worship!' is a really sound saying. However, if I tried to prove the soundness of this saying and explain it, I would have to write a treatise. The same is true of the saying of the Prophet ﷺ, 'Of this world of yours, women and perfume have been made beloved to me, and the coolness of my eye lies in the prayer.'"[847]

Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab, a pre-Islamic Arab warrior, said, "When marrying, choose a beautiful woman whose face gives you comfort, for a man

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longing.

[845] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 53, See aṭ-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*,

[846] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 53

[847] Aḥmad; an-Nasā'ī ; al-Ḥākim; Ibn Yaḥyā, 2008, p. 13

enjoys looking at a woman and finds pleasure in her presence. A beautiful face is the first gift that you can expect of a woman."[848]

FACIAL MOLE

Also known euphemistically as 'beauty spots' or 'beauty marks,' a facial mole is located on the cheek or above the lip.

FLIRTATIOUSNESS

Flirtatiousness is to behave in such a way as to suggest playfully a sexual attraction to someone.

Ad-Daylamī narrated from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Allah loves a woman who is flattering (*mulqāh*) and flirtatious (*bazghah*) with her husband but chaste with other men."[849]

Ad-Daylamī narrated in *al-Firdaws* that ʿAlī رضي الله عنه said, "Allah loves a flattering, prominent, skilful (*labiqah*) woman."

In the Arabic dictionary *al-Qāmūs, labiqah* is said to mean being skilful in flirtation (*ḥusnah dāll*) or coquetry (*ghanj*)."[850]

Allah ﷻ said, "*We have brought them into being as maidens and made them purest virgins, devoted, passionate (ʿurub), of like age.*"[851]

In the Arabic dictionary *aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ*, *ʿurub* are defined as women who are loving towards their husbands.[852] Ibn ʿAbbās said that the word *ʿurub* in the aforementioned *āyat* means a flirtatious woman (*ghunjah*).[853] Ibn Jarīr narrated that *ʿāribah*[854] (a derivative of *ʿurub*) is a woman who speaks well. Another narrator said it indicates good spousal conduct. Ibn al-Mundhir related on the authority of Mujāhid that it means a lusty woman (*ghalimah*). ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmayr said it is a woman who desires her husband.[855]

GOD-FEARING

A God-fearing woman is a deeply devout woman who is devoted to serving her Lord to the best of her abilities. The Prophet ﷺ advised men to marry women who are deeply committed to the life-transaction of

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[848] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p.16

[849] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 145

[850] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p.155

[851] Al-Wāqiʿah 56: 35-37

[852] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 144

[853] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 144

[854] The word *ʿāribah* derives from the same root as Arabic, which has the sense of speaking well and clearly, rather than mumbling.

[855] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 144

Islam, "Women are married for four reasons: their wealth, standing, beauty or *dīn* (religion). So marry a woman of *dīn* and you will prosper."[856]

GOOD CHARACTER

Character refers to the distinctive mental and moral qualities of an individual. Al-Ghazālī said, "If a wife is impudent and foul-mouthed, or bad character and ungrateful for kindness, she will do more harm than good. Patience with the tongues of women is one of the trials borne by the Prophets."[857]

The Yoruba proverb has it that, "Character is beauty." [858]

Another Yoruba proverb says, "A woman without good character will have her mother as a co-wife" [859] meaning a woman without good character is unlikely to find a husband irrespective of how beautiful she is.

HAIR

While all men vary in their preferences, many erotologists report that most men prefer women with long hair. The desired hair texture – whether it is straight, curly, wavy or coiled (Afro-textured) hair – depends on cultural perceptions of beauty.

It is rightly said, "Hair is half of [a woman's] beauty."

Blonde and jet-black hair are frequently cited by erotologists as the most desired hair colour, though there are many men who prefer brown or red-haired women.

HYGIENE

As-Ṣuyuṭī advised, "Ladies I counsel you with a good piece of advice. Bear it well in mind, and to its constant nightly practice, be not blind! Take care of your genitalia!"[860]

LINGERIE

Lingerie refers to women's underwear, nightwear or other items of intimate apparel.

Ibn Falīta cites a *hadith*, which we have been unable to trace, "The best of wives is the one who takes off the dress of modesty when she undresses and puts on the dress of modesty when she dresses."[861]

Sexy lingerie is an easy and inconspicuous way of increasing amorous confidence in a woman. Seductive dress entices the husband and makes the lovemaking experience more enjoyable. Speaking about seductive dress in the Sacred Law, Muḥammad ibn Adam al-Kawtharī said, "A woman may adorn herself for sexual relations with her husband by dressing in appealing, seductive and revealing clothing. It is not against religious propriety (*adab*) and modesty (*ḥayā'*) to wear clothing such as luxurious lingerie and alluring underwear, provided it is only for the husband and that there is no third person with the couple. In fact, as mentioned earlier, if the intention is to keep herself and her husband chaste, she will be rewarded *Insha Allah* (God-willing)."[862]

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[856] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5090

[857] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, pp. 48-49

[858] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 270

[859] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 271

[860] Aṣ-Ṣuyuṭī, 1987, p. 8

[861] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 42. We have been unable to trace the source of this *ḥadīth*.

LIPS

Full lips are desirable for a great number of men as they are a sign of high levels of oestrogen and are particularly kissable.

Al-Jāḥiz says, "A woman's sweetest most attractive feature are her lips and the darker they are, the more attractive they are."[863]

MODESTY

The modesty which is desired, is of three types: modesty in behaviour, in dress and in attitude. Modest dressing means not wearing revealing or suggestive clothing that would attract unwarranted attention from men. Modest behaviour is when a woman conducts herself appropriately so as to avoid impropriety or indecency. It includes being polite and respectful to others. A modest attitude is the opposite of pride and vanity. A beautiful woman possessing these characteristics is like a hidden gem.

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī cites a weak *hadith*, "The best of women are those who, when they remove their clothes, their modesty is removed with them. And when they don their clothes, they also don modesty."[864]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Indecency spoils everything. And modesty adorns everything."[865]

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī related, "The best women among you are those who discard the armour of shyness when they undress for their husbands, and put on the armour of shyness when they dress again."[866]

It has been said, "There is nothing more beautiful than a beautiful woman who doesn't know how beautiful she is."

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[862] Al-Kawtharī, 2008, p. 41

[863] Al-Jāḥiẓ, 2002, p. 39

[864] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 149. A weak *ḥadīth*.

[865] Ibn Mājah, 4185

[866] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 149

It has also been said, "Beauty without modesty is like a conversation without honesty."

The following occurred when renowned African-American boxer and activist Muḥammad ʿAlī's daughter arrived at his home wearing revealing clothing. His daughter Hana herself related that ʿAlī gave her the following words of advice, "When we finally arrived, the chauffeur escorted my younger sister, Laila, and me up to my father's suite. As usual, he was hiding behind the door waiting to scare us. We exchanged many hugs and kisses as we could possible give in one day. My father took a good look at us. Then he sat me down on his lap and said something that I will never forget. He looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'Hana, everything that God made valuable in the world is covered and hard to get to. Where do you find diamonds? Deep down in the ground, covered and protected. Where do you find pearls? Deep down at the bottom of the ocean, covered up and protected in a beautiful shell. Where do you find gold? Way down in the mine, covered over with layers and layers of rock. You've got to work hard to get to them.' He looked at me with serious eyes, 'Your body is sacred. You're far more precious than diamonds and pearls, and you should be covered too.'"[867]

The modesty that men find attractive in a woman is not a lack of ability or unwillingness to act decisively in sexual activities with her spouse, as the following Yoruba proverb states, "The vagina says that it is coyness that caused it to hide below the belly, but if a penis shows up, it will open the way for it."[868]

OBEDIENCE

Obedience is complying with an order or request, or submission to another person's authority. Allah made men protectors and maintainers of women and enjoined upon wives to obey their husbands in all matters that do not go against Islam.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked by a man, "Which women are best?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Whose appearance delights you, who obey your command, guard your wealth and their private parts."[869]

Al-Bayhaqī narrated that Asmā' bint Yazīd al-Ansārī said, "Messenger of Allah, you men are preferred over us [women] by Friday congregational prayer (*jumuʿah*), daily congregational prayer [at the mosque], visiting the sick, attending funerals, performing hajj without a non-marriageable person (*maḥram*) and better than that is *jihād* in the way of Allah." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied, "Your good treatment of your husband, seeking his pleasure, being obedient to him and sleeping with him is equal to all of that."[870]

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[867] See Hana Ali's *More than A Her: Muhammad Ali's Life Lessons Through His Daughter's Eyes,*

[868] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 182

[869] Aḥmad; an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3231

Ibn al-Jawzī said, "The finest of women are those who are tall when they stand, large when they sit, most truthful when they speak, forbearing when angry, whose laughter is a smile, who do things to perfection when making anything, women who obey their husbands, stay in their houses, women who humble themselves and whose every utterance is a praiseworthy one."[871]

PLUMPNESS

Plumpness is the quality of having a full rounded shape, and sometimes rather fat or chubby.

Al-Qurṭubī narrated in *Faḍl al-ʿilm* (the virtues of knowledge), "The adornment of men is the upper portion of the chest and the adornment of women is in plumpness."[872]

Ibn Shubrumah said, "I have not seen a garment worn by men more beautiful than eloquence nor have I seen a garment worn by women more beautiful than meat."[873]

Ibn Khālawayh said, "A man does not adorn himself with anything better than good manners nor do women [adorn themselves] with anything better than plumpness."[874]

It is said, "In women fatness is desired and in men, intelligence."[875]

REPUTATION

Reputation refers to the opinion generally held about someone or something. A woman's reputation is extremely valuable in the eyes of men; once she loses it, she loses her allure. A man may sleep with a promiscuous woman, but such a woman will not attain his love or respect. This may be morally unfair and unjust, as a man may be promiscuous himself, but this does not alter the fact that a woman's chastity and reputation is highly valued in the eyes of men.

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870 Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 148

871 Ibn al-Jawzī, 2007, p. 34

872 Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 117

873 Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 117

874 Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 117

875 Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 118

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "Choose well for your seed, because children tend to take after their mother."[876]

ʿĀ'ishah ﵂ the wife of the Prophet ﷺ said, "The best of women is one who does not speak evil things, does not deceive men, gives all her heart to her husband and does not spoil her family's reputation by disgrace."[877]

A Yoruba proverb says, "She is courted at home; she is courted on the farm; once the girl becomes pregnant, will there not be an end to courting?" – meaning however attractive and desirable a woman may be, once she becomes pregnant, she no longer attracts suitors.[878]

"The most attractive quality in a woman is when you know that she hasn't been with everybody and she won't be with just anybody,"

It has also been said, "The more sexual partners a woman has, the less desirable she becomes."

RESPECT

Respect is a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities or achievements.

It has been said, "A respectful woman is a righteous woman."

A woman who is respectful of herself and others will be loved and admired by men. Some men differ in what they respect in a woman; some men place particular emphasis on her clothing, demeanour or academic achievements. The more respect a man has for a woman, the more he is physically drawn to her.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness is the quality of being morally good and virtuous. To be righteous, is to possess moral qualities of a high standard. Indeed a good woman is a treasure, but righteous women are scarce according to the sacred texts from both the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. When asked what the best of this world is, the Prophet ﷺ said, "A righteous woman, a spacious house and a good horse."[879]

The Prophet ﷺ was reported to have said, "A righteous woman stands out among other women like the white-bellied crow among a hundred ordinary crows."[880]

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[876] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 56

[877] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 10, Muḥāḍarat al-udabā', vol. 3, p. 202

[878] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 357

[879] Ḥākim, Aḥmad, Ibn Ḥibbān

[880] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 63

The Prophet ﷺ said, "The world is an enjoyment, and the best of its enjoyment is a righteous woman (*ṣāliḥah*)."[881]

The Book of Proverbs says:

A good woman is hard to find, and worth far more than diamonds.
Her husband trusts her without reserve,
and never has reason to regret it.
Never spiteful, she treats him generously all her life long.
She shops around for the best yarns and cottons, and
enjoys knitting and sewing. like a trading ship that sails
to faraway places and brings back exotic surprises.
She's up before dawn, preparing breakfast for
her family and organizing her day.
She looks over a field and buys it, then, with
money she's put aside, plants a garden.
First thing in the morning, she dresses for work,
rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started.
She senses the worth of her work, is in no
hurry to call it quits for the day.
She's skilled in the crafts of home and
hearth, diligent in homemaking.
She's quick to assist anyone in need, reaches out to help the poor.
She doesn't worry about her family when it snows; their
winter clothes are all mended and ready to wear.
She makes her own clothing, and dresses in colourful linens and silks.
Her husband is greatly respected when he
deliberates with the city fathers.
She designs gowns and sells them, brings the
sweaters she knits to the dress shops.
Her clothes are well-made and elegant, and she
always faces tomorrow with a smile.
When she speaks she has something worthwhile
to say, and she always says it kindly.
She keeps an eye on everyone in her household,
and keeps them all busy and productive.
Her children respect and bless her; her husband
joins in with words of praise:

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[881] Muslim, *Kitāb ar-riḍāʿ*, 1467,; an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3232; Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1928; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4020

> "Many women have done wonderful things,
> but you've outclassed them all!"
> Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades. The woman to be
> admired and praised is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-God.
> Give her everything she deserves! Festoon her life with praises![882]

ʿAbd al-Malik narrated, "When ʿAwf ibn Muhallim ash-Shaybānī, one of the most highly respected chiefs of Arab nobility in *Jāhiliyyah*, married his daughter Umm Iyās to al-Ḥārith ibn ʿAmr al-Kindī, she was prepared to be taken to the groom. Then her mother, Umāmah came to advise her and said:

> Daughter, if it were deemed unnecessary to give you this advice because of good manners and noble descent, then it would have been unnecessary for you, because you possess these qualities, but it will serve as a reminder to those who are forgetful, and will help those who are wise.
>
> Daughter, if a woman were able to do without a husband by virtue of her father's wealth and her need for her father, then you of all people would be most able to do without a husband, but women were created for men just as men were created for them.
>
> Daughter, you are about to leave the home in which you grew up, where you first learned to walk, to go to a place you do not know, to a companion with whom you are unfamiliar. By marrying you, he has become your master, so be like a servant to him, and he will become like a servant to you. Take from me ten qualities, which will be a provision and a reminder for you.
>
> The first and second of them are: be content in his company, and listen to and obey him, for contentment brings peace of mind, and listening to and obeying one's husband pleases Allah.
>
> The third and fourth of them are: make sure that you smell and look good; he should not see anything ugly in you, and he should not smell anything but a pleasant smell from you. *Kohl* is the best kind of beautification to be found, and water is better than the rarest perfume.
>
> The fifth and sixth of them are: prepare his food on time, and keep quiet when he is asleep, for raging hunger is like a burning flame, and disturbing his sleep will make him angry.

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[882] Proverbs 31: 10 – 31

> The seventh and eighth of them are: take care of his servants and children, and take care of his wealth, for taking care of his wealth shows that you appreciate him, and taking care of his children and servants shows good management.
>
> The ninth and tenth of them are: never disclose any of his secrets, and never disobey any of his orders, for if you disclose any of his secrets you will never feel safe from his possible betrayal, and if you disobey him, his heart will be filled with hatred towards you.
>
> Be careful, daughter, of showing joy in front of him when he is upset, and do not show sorrow in front of him when he is happy, because the former shows a lack of judgment whilst the latter will make him unhappy.
>
> Show him as much honour and respect as you can, and agree with him as much as you can, so that he will enjoy your companionship and conversation.
>
> Know daughter that you will not achieve what you would like to until you put his pleasure before your own, and his wishes before yours, in whatever you like and dislike. And may Allah choose what is best for you and protect you."""[883]

The African proverb has it that, "A woman's polite devotion is her greatest beauty."

It has been said:

> A good woman has amazing qualities
> She can deal with stress and carry heavy burdens.
> She smiles when she feels like screaming.
> She sings when she feels like crying.
> She cries when she is happy and laughs when she's afraid.
> Her love is unconditional and her loyalty is undeniable.
> There is only one thing wrong with her.....she sometimes forgets her worth.

Some of the most beautiful women of quality are unmarried. The reason for this in many cases is not because something is wrong with the women as the following parable illustrates:

> Women are like apples on trees. The best ones are at the top of the tree and the rotten apples are on the floor. Many men do not want

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[883] Narrated in Jamharah khuṭab al-ʿArab, 1/145

> to reach for the good ones because they are afraid of falling and getting hurt, so they pick up the bad apples from the ground that aren't good but are easy to get.
>
> The apples at the top of the tree think that something is wrong with them when in reality they are the best. They just have to wait for the right man to come along, the one who's brave enough to climb all the way to the top of the tree."

It has been said: "Never take a good woman for granted because one day you might wake up and realise that you have lost a diamond whilst you were too busy collecting stones."

SEDUCTION

Seduction is the ability to entice an individual into sexual activity.

Al-Bayhaqī narrated, in *Dalā'il an-nubuwwah,* that a man called Māzin said, "Messenger of Allah, I am passionately fond (*mūla'*) of entertainment, drinking wine and *halūk* from women." Ibn Fāris said *halūk* means *ghunjah* (flirtation), Thaʿlab said it means a lustful (*shabiqah*) sensuous (*ghalimah*) woman. Ibn al-Athīr in *an-Nihāyah* said, "It is a woman seductively swaying in order to have intercourse." In the Arabic dictionary *al-Qāmūs, halūk* is said to mean a woman who, "gives good treatment to her husband. It is [also said that it refers to a] licentious woman whoring after men.[884]

SKIN COMPLEXION

Ibn Falīta said, "Men differ in their choice of different complexions. The majority of men prefer women of a white complexion that also has a trace of red. This complexion is said to be the best and the one that attracts the attention of poets and lovers. In fact, a smooth complexion of a pleasing colour arouses one's sexual desires. However, there are some men who prefer women of a brown complexion, which is also a pleasing colour if it has a trace of red. There are also some men who prefer black women and praise them."

ʿĀ'ishah ﵂ said, "Whiteness is half of beauty."[885]

Andalusian poet Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi said in *The Unique Necklace* (*al-ʿIqd al-farīd*) about the beauties of white complexioned women:

Never have I seen or heard of such a thing,
  A pearl that for modesty transforms itself into a cornelian.

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[884] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 145

[885] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011., vol. 1, p. 114

So white is her face that, when you contemplate her perfection,
  You see your own face submerged in its clarity.[886]

As the old Arab saying goes, "When the woman is beautiful, of good character, black-pupilled, long-haired, fair-skinned, loving to her husband, keeping her glances for him, she is the very picture of wide-eyed houris."[887]

Ibn Falīta related from a poet who praised the attractiveness of dark complexioned women:

She was loved for her complexion
  Which is like black eyes.
Seeing her brown complexion, men are
  Attracted to her, giving her all their love.[888]

African-American proverb has it that, "The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice."

SOCIAL STANDING

Social standing refers to a person's status or social class in society.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Women are married for four reasons: their wealth, standing, beauty or *dīn* (religion). So marry a woman of *dīn* and you will prosper."[889]

A woman of high social standing is sought after by men as she is not easily attainable, thus adding to her allure in their eyes.

Jamaican musician Bob Marley famously said,

If she's amazing she won't be amazing,
  If she's amazing she won't be easy,
If she's worth it, you won't give up.
  If you give up, you're not worthy.
Truth is, everybody is going to hurt you,
  you just have to find the ones worth suffering for.

SMILE

Smiling not only makes a woman appear more attractive, it also has health benefits such as reducing stress levels, releasing endorphins, lowering blood pressure. It can even change a person's mood.

The Yoruba proverb has it that:

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[886] See Joan Penelope Cope's *Arabic Andalusian Casidas*

[887] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 52

[888] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 51

[889] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5090

"The adornment of a smile is white teeth,
the adornment of a person is good character."[890]

African-American poet Tupac Amaru Shakur said:

The power of a gun can kill,
And the power of fire can burn.
The power of wind can chill
And the power of a mind can learn.
The power of anger can rage
Inside until it tears you apart.
But the power of a smile,
Especially yours, can heal a frozen heart.

It has been said, "A smile is said to be the most beautiful curve on a woman's body."

TEETH

The Yoruba proverb says, "When a woman's front teeth break, the mainstay of [her] beauty is demolished." [891]

THE VAGINA

Ibn Saʿd reported in the *Ṭabaqāt* that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ said, "Choose for yourselves from women a burning one (*ḥāriqah*)." As-Ṣuyuṭī said that *ḥāriqah* means a woman with a tight vagina (*ḍayyiqah al-farj*).[892]

At-Tījānī said, "No one disagrees concerning the desirability of a large and thick vagina. Those who differ regarding the desirability of plumpness, slenderness, largeness of breast, ampleness of buttocks or their averageness do not differ [regarding the vagina]. Indeed they all agree that the thicker and more ample the vagina is, the more it increases in goodness. For indeed it warrants praise and esteem!"[893]

Al-Ḥasanī said, "You must know, may Allah guide you, that the perfection of a woman's pleasure (i.e. in sexual intercourse with her) will not occur for a man unless her vagina has the following three qualities: tightness, warmth and dryness from wetness. If one or two of these qualities are not present, it will decrease the man's sexual pleasure. If all three of these qualities are not present in the vagina, the man will not attain any sexual pleasure. Masturbation would actually be more pleasurable, and easier for him to ejaculate [than having intercourse with a woman whose vagina has none of these qualities]."[894]

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[890] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 268

[891] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 268

[892] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 157

[893] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 120

VIRGINITY

The Prophet ﷺ is cited to have said, "Marry virgins for they have the sweetest mouths, the most productive wombs and are content with less."[895]

And he ﷺ also said, "Go and take a virgin as your wife, whom you will play with and who will play with you."[896]

ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها narrated, "I asked [the Prophet ﷺ], 'Messenger of Allah, if you were to alight in a valley that had a tree that had been eaten from and a tree that had not been eaten from, on which of them would you graze your camel?' He replied, 'The one that had not been grazed before.'" By that she meant that the Prophet ﷺ had not married a virgin other than her.[897]

VOICE

Men tend to desire women with higher-pitched voices with a breathless quality, some scientific studies have found.[898] A high-pitched voice is a sign of femininity and of youthfulness.

Ibn Falīta said, "A sweet voice is one of the best reasons for falling in love. An ugly woman may be loved for her sweet voice and a beautiful woman may be rejected for her ugly voice."[899]

Some men prefer women with deep, husky voices, or women with 'foreign' attractive accents such as Spanish, Italian, or Arabic for English-speakers.

VOLUPTUOUSNESS

Voluptuousness is an adjective to describe a curvaceous and sexually attractive woman.

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[894] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, p. 187

[895] Ibn Muhammad al-Yemini, 2006, p. 17; Ibn Mājah; aṭ-Ṭabarānī

[896] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5245, 5247, an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3219, 3220, 3226, at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1100. In another narration by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet said, *"Why, didn't you like virgins and fondling with them."* al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5080

[897] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 4789

[898] Scientists from UCL (University College London) found that men find women with high-pitched but breathy voices as the most appealing. A 2010 study by Albright College in Pennsylvannia, US, showed women lower the pitch of their voice when they want to signal that they are attracted to another person, researchers found

[899] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 49

Al-Jāḥiz said, "I have noticed that most expert judges of feminine beauty set great store by voluptuousness."[900]

He also says about the voluptuousness that men desire in women, "Poets are fond of describing the female figure and distinguish between fat women and voluptuous women. By 'voluptuous,' they mean good muscle tone and an absence of sag or flab. They talk about the voluptuous woman as being 'curved like a sabre, lissom like a snake and supple like a bamboo cane or tightly plaited rope.'

"The way a woman rolls her hips when she walks is one of a woman's finest features but this is considered shameful in a man, since it is mark of effeminacy. Many poets have described the voluptuous female figure to great effect. Here is one example:

Her legs like supple branches, her breasts like full firm mounds,
Her eyes like those of a gazelle – clear and brought and round.

and another [poet said]:

Her waist firm and flat, her breasts are like mounds,
When walking, her backside all but makes her sit down!

and another [poet said]:

When walking, the weight of her backside's immensity
Could pull down her hips in obedience to gravity!

[The poet] Ahwas said:

Shapely, like a plaited rope, her clothes her curves caressing,
And every time she rolls her hips, she grants another blessing!

There are many more examples than I could possibly mention here."[901]

WAIST

Ibn Falīta said, "A woman [is desired when she] has a slender waist and a well-developed back with unprotruding vertebrae."[902]

YOUTHFULNESS

Youthfulness is an adjective to describe a person who is either actually young or young in being.

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[900] Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib. 1977

[901] Al-Jāḥiẓ, 2002, p. 217

[902] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 50

The Prophet ﷺ said, "But why didn't you [marry] a young lady, so that you could play with her, and she could play with you?"[903]

Detestable Qualities

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "The sort of woman that men find repulsive is ugly and sullen with matted hair, a protruding forehead and dirty, slit eyes. She has a big nose, wide mouth, bluish lips and wrinkled cheeks, is gap-toothed and sprouts hairs on her chin. The sinews and veins on her wizened neck stick out, her shoulders and chest are narrow and her sagging dugs are leathery. Her belly is like an empty basin and her navel juts out like a walnut. Her ribs protrude like bows, her backbone like an iron chain and her buttocks are bony and scrawny. Her vagina is cold and loose, dirty and smelly, lumpy and bumpy and has a discharge. She has knobbly knees, spindly legs, big, flat feet and enormous hands. A woman like that is no good at all, nor is the man who marries her or approaches her. May the Lord protect us from her and her like!

"A raucous woman with a loud laugh is unattractive. It has been said that if a woman is often seen joking and fooling around, then she is a slut. Similarly, there is the woman who discloses her husband's secrets and his personal business; or the one who delights in the misfortunes of others and points out the shortcomings of good, honest people, even those of her own husband; there is the woman who is never out of the neighbours' houses; the interfering busy-body and the shrew; the shrill, strident woman who never stops talking; the gossip and tell-tale; the frivolous air-head; the indolent stay-a-bed; the self-righteous harridan who loves to find fault; the hysteric, the nag and the pilfering slag; the woman who slanders and makes false accusation; the spreader of scandal and insinuation; the woman who spies and makes trouble and cheats, who schemes and tells lies and is full of deceit – that two-faced deceiver whose promise, when spoken, is her word to be broken. You feel a sense of dread if she comes near and heave a sigh of relief when she turns away."[904]

Ibn Yaḥyā continued in a similar vein, "A very fat body, a very thin body, a red complexion, thin hair, an ugly face, thick eyebrows, hollow and narrow eyes, squint eyes, upturned eyelids, a crooked nose, short teeth, tall teeth, overlapped teeth, sunken teeth, yellow or green teeth, very small breasts, long and flabby breasts, a large belly, thin buttocks, thin legs, a small vulva, [a woman of] impudence, obscenity, rashness, thoughtlessness and stupidity."

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[903] Al-Bukhārī,, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5245, 5247, an-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3219, 3220, 3226, at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1100. In another narration by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet said, *"Why, didn't you like virgins and fondling with them."* al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5080

[904] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, p. 32

Ibn Falīta said, "Man detests a woman who refuses to give herself up to him. Many women intentionally behave in this manner because they think that their refusal makes men love them and so increases their sexual desire. But this is absurd because that would make the man turn away from the woman and would decrease his love for her. The men would take an aversion to her especially at the time of sexual intercourse because he would call to mind the difficulty he had experienced in bringing her to yield to him. His aversion might lead to separation if she continued to refuse him. However, there are some people who tend to believe that such refusals strengthens the man's sexual desire, but I personally see that this is a sort of asinine behaviour, for whenever a she-ass [donkey] kicks an ass, the latter feels more intense sexual desire."[905]

Luqman the wise gave this counsel to his son, "My son, beware of a bad woman, for she will turn you prematurely grey, beware of mischievous women, for they provoke one to no good, and be on your guard even with the best of them."[906]

Amongst the other repulsive qualities that men find unattractive in women are nagging, selfishness, deceitfulness, cattiness and extreme jealousy. The Prophet ﷺ himself avoided marrying some women who were extremely jealous as the following tradition informs us: Anas ؓ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was asked, "Why don't you marry a woman from the Anṣār?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "[Because] they are extremely jealous."[907]

The Prophet ﷺ said. "There are four things that are essential for happiness: a righteous wife, a spacious house, a good neighbour, and a sound mount [i.e. means of transportation]. And there are four things that makes one miserable: a wretched wife, a cramped house, a bad neighbour, and a poor mount."[908]

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[905] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 46

[906] Al-Ghazālī, 2007, p. 65

[907] An-Nasā'ī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3233

[908] Ibn Ḥibbān, Aḥmad, Ḥākim

CHAPTER 12

Preparation for Copulation

Allah ﷻ says in His Noble Book, "*Send good ahead for yourselves.*"[909]

THIS QUR'ĀNIC PASSAGE can be read as an example of euphemistic usage in the Qur'ān. On one level of meaning, good deeds are stored up in the next life as a result of obeying Allah's commands. However, as Professor Abdel Haleem said, "It can also be interpreted as 'make preparation for yourselves beforehand,' suggesting that husbands should be gentle and careful with their wives and prepare them psychologically and physically for intimacy. This is in keeping with the Prophet's ﷺ instructions in such matters, 'Let a man not fall on his wife like a donkey. Let him send a messenger beforehand.' When he was asked what sort of messenger, he said, 'A kiss, for instance.'"[910]

The Best Time to have Sexual Intercourse

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said, "It is best to have sexual intercourse only after digestion is complete and when the body is balanced and in a normal condition, midway between hot and cold, and between being full and being empty – but if a man has to make a mistake, then intercourse on a full stomach is less harmful than repressing it. It is said that [the Prophet's Companion] Ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنهما never had intercourse except after a meal. Intercourse should be avoided when one is tired, sad, or disappointed, and also after taking medicine. It should only be indulged in when there is a strong desire, and only when this desire is aroused neither by effort nor by erotic ideas or sights. It should be the result of there being an excess of semen.

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[909] Al-Baqarah 2:223

[910] Abdel Haleem, 2011, p. 126

If intercourse does not exceed the bounds of moderation, then it revives inward energy, makes a man joyful, awakes his appetite for food, and dissipates sad thoughts, melancholy preoccupations and depression. Sexual abstinence has resulted in disease more than once. Intercourse safeguards health, but excessive intercourse results in tremors and palsies, and weakens the faculties, and dims the eyesight."[911]

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah says, "The most beneficial intercourse is that which takes place after digestion, and when the body's state is one of moderation in terms of heat and cold, dryness and moisture, emptiness and repletion."

DAYS OF *TASHRĪQ* (11TH, 12TH, AND 13TH OF DHUL HIJJAH)

Ibn Abī Shaybah narrated that ʿUmayr ibn Khalaf al-Anṣārī narrated from his mother that the Prophet ﷺ despatched ʿAlī ؓ on the day of *tashrīq*, announcing to the people, "These days are the days of eating, drinking and sexual intercourse!"[912]

SUPPLICATION PRIOR TO INTERCOURSE

Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "If any of you intends to go to his wife [to have intercourse], you should say, "In the name of Allah. Allah avert Shaytan from us and avert Shaytan from what you have bestowed upon us." And if He has decreed a child for them, Shaytan will never be able to harm the child."[913]

Perfume

Erogenous perfume is a recurring theme in Eastern erotology treatises, and has since been endorsed by modern science.

An-Nafzāwī said, "One of the stimulants of sexual desire is the use of perfume by both partners. When a woman detects the scent of perfume on a man, she relaxes and unwinds. A man might thus try perfume as a means to coupling with a woman."[914]

At-Tirmidhī relates, "Four things are from the ways of the Prophets: modesty, applying perfume, using a tooth-stick (*siwāk*) and marriage."[915]

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Women and perfume have been made beloved to me, but the coolness of my eyes lies in prayer."[916]

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[911] As-Suyuti (translated by Ahmad Thomson), 2009, p. 20

[912] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 77

[913] Al-Bukhārī *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5165; Muslim, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3361; at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1092

[914] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, p. 7

[915] At-Tirmidhī, 1080

[916] Aḥmad, an-Nasā'ī, al-Ḥākim

ʿĀ'ishah ﵂ said, "I scented the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he went round [to have intercourse with] all his wives."[917]

It is said in a *hadith*, "Scent is the food of the soul, and the soul is the riding beast of the faculties of man."[918]

It has been said by wise people, "Women are not safe from two things: men and perfume."[919]

Abū al-Baghdādī said in his treatise on perfume, "Perfume (*ṭīb*) is the greatest human pleasure and the strongest call to intercourse and fulfilling desire. Because of that Musaylimah said, 'Use a lot of perfume, for when a woman smells perfume she thinks about sex.'"[920]

Al-Ḥasanī said, "The medicines that sweeten the body and clothes of a woman are generally made for the desire of a man. If a woman has a foul smell, she should use a lot of perfume of musk and ambergris to enjoy the good favours of her husband."[921]

Al-Kawtharī says, "Naturally, perfume has a major role to play in sexual activity. A pleasant smell arouses sexual instinct and increases pleasure and performance. As such, the wife should endeavour to apply perfume as part of her adornment for sexual relations with her husband. She should choose a perfume that is best suited for her and likely to please her husband. It will also help remove any bad odour she may have on her body or clothes."[922]

Aphrodisiacs

An aphrodisiac is a food, drink or any other thing that stimulates sexual desire.[923] In classic erotological literature, aphrodisiacs are of two types: foods and non-foods. Below are some of the aphrodisiacs that the sacred sources mention.

DIETARY APHRODISIACS

The association between sexuality and food is a constant element in erotological literature and traditionalists narrated that in their works. A few of the foods that are believed to possess aphrodisiacal qualities are enumerated below:

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[917] Al-Bukhārī

[918] An-Nasā'ī, As-Suyuti (translated by Ahmad Thomson), 2009, p. 20

[919] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 120

[920] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 120

[921] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, p. 175

[922] Al-Kawtharī, 2008, p. 42

[923] Oxford Dictionary

HARISSA

Harissa is a hot, aromatic paste made from chilli and assorted other spices. It is widely used in North African and Middle Eastern cuisines.

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī related, "The Prophet ﷺ once complained to Angel Jibril that he could not have sexual intercourse often. Jibril advised, 'Why do you not eat harissa? There is the strength of forty men in this dish!'"[924]

HONEY (ʿASL)

Honey is a natural, sweet, syrupy fluid created by bees from the nectar of flowers. The pleasant aroma and taste of the viscous liquid, ranging in colour from pale yellow to dark amber, varies according to geographical and seasonal conditions.[925] In ancient and medieval times, honey was widely considered the food of foods, drink of drinks and the drug of drugs. Honey is an ancient aphrodisiac, its reputation for that going back to as far as the times of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. Much of ancient Egyptian aphrodisiacal medicine was based on using honey to enhance sexual potency. Celebrated ancient Greek physicians Hippocrates and Galen recommended honey for its beneficial effects on sexual health, as did the Persian physician Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā in Arabic). Since some honey is rich in boron (a substance that promotes testosterone production), it increases libido in both men and women. It is also said, that honey can cure sterility and help prevent erectile dysfunction.[926] Several Muslim erotologists also prescribed honey as a form of sexual healing.[927]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said in *The Perfumed Garden*, "He who feels that he is too weak for coition, before going to bed should drink a glassful of very thick honey."[928]

Ibn Qayyim said honey was among the most excellent of foods and the most beneficial to the body, liver and organs. Nourishment from honey, according to Ibn Qayyim, brings great benefit in preserving health and strength.[929] The Prophet ﷺ used to like eating honey and, in several *ḥadīths*, he spoke of its benefits and healing powers.[930]

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[924] As-Suyuti (translated by Ahmad Thomson), 2009, p. 19

[925] A.R. Aparna & D. Rajalakshmi, 1999, p. 455

[926] Aṭ-Ṭūsī, 2014, p. 99

[927] Al-Ḥasanī, 2011, p. 99

[928] Sheikh Nefzaoui (translated by Richard Burton), 2010, p. 134

[929] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Medicine of the Prophet* (translated by Penelope Johnstone), 2008, p. 162

[930] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭibb, bāb ad-dawā' al-ʿasl*, no. 5680.

He ﷺ said, "Healing is in three things: a drink of honey, the glass of the cupper and cauterisation with fire. But I forbid my community to use cauterisation."[931]

He ﷺ also said, "If there is any good in your medicines, then it is in a drink of honey, cupping and cauterisation with fire. But I do not like cauterisation."[932]

And the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever eats honey three mornings each month, will not suffer any serious affliction."[933]

And, "You should take the two [things] that bring healing: honey and the Qur'ān."[934]

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said, "The medicine of the Prophet ﷺ is not like that of physicians. For the medicine of the Prophet ﷺ is certain, definitive and divine; it originates in Revelation, the niche of prophecy and the perfection of intellect. The medicine of others consists for the most part of conjecture, suppositions and experiments. It is not denied that in many cases sick people do not benefit from the medicine of the Prophet ﷺ. For those who can benefit from it are only those who are ready to accept it, and who believe in its healing powers, and perfectly trust it through faith and obedience. Even the Qur'ān, which certainly heals the illness of hearts, if not accepted in this way, will not cause any healing. As for the hypocrites it will but increase their uncleanness and add to their previous illness; and to what possible extent could physical medicine be applied here? For the medicine of the Prophet ﷺ is only suitable for pure bodies, and in the same way the healing of the Qur'ān is only suitable for pure spirits and hearts that are alive. People's aversion to the medicine of the Prophet ﷺ is like the aversion to seeking healing through the Qur'ān, which is effective healing. This is not because of any defect in the medicine, rather it is due to their evil natures, distorted physiques and ultimately their reluctance to accept such healing."[935]

In the Qur'ān, Allah makes mention of the efficacy of honey as a medicine, *"From inside them comes a drink of varying colours, it containing healing for mankind. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect."*[936] The *āyat* was interpreted differently by the Companions and early Muslims.

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[931] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭibb, bāb ash-shifā'fī thalāth,* no. 5680; Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭibb,* no. 3620

[932] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭibb, bāb al-ḥajam ash-shaqīqah wa al-ṣidā',* no. 5702

[933] Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭibb*, no. 3576

[934] Ibn Mājah, *Kitāb aṭ-ṭibb*, no. 3578

[935] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, (translated by Penelope Johnstone), 2008, pp. 25-26

[936] An-Naḥl 16: 69

There are two opinions as to whether the pronoun of *'it containing'* refers to the drinking of honey or to the Qur'ān. The correct one, according to Ibn Qayyim, being that it refers to the drinking of honey, and this is also the opinion of Ibn Masʿūd, Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ and the majority of the commentators. There are also authentic *ḥadīth*s which support this interpretation.[937]

A prophetic tradition related by ad-Dārimī shows the medical effects of honey, "A man went to the Prophet ﷺ and told him his brother had violent pains in his body, and the Prophet ﷺ told him to give the sick man honey. He did as he was told, but soon came back to say his brother was no better. The Prophet ﷺ answered, 'Go back and give him more honey. Indeed Allah speaks the truth; your brother's body lies.' When the honey was taken again, the sick man, thanks to the grace of Allah, recovered immediately."[938]

Another prophetic tradition states, "For you there are two remedies: the Qur'ān and honey. Honey is the cure for all maladies, while the Qur'ān is for the heart."[939]

The Bible also speaks about the benefits and aphrodisiacal nature of honey, "My child, eat honey, for it is good, and the honeycomb is sweet to the taste."[940]

And again:

> Your lips drip honey, my bride,
>   Milk and honey are under your tongue.
> The scent of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.[941]

And in another passage concerning the heroic figure Samson, "When he (Samson) returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to look at the carcass of the lion. And he found that a swarm of bees had made some honey in the carcass. He scooped some of the honey into his hands and ate it along the way. He also gave some to his father and mother, and they ate it. But he didn't tell them he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion." [942]

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[937] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, (translated by Penelope Johnstone), 2008, pp. 25-26

[938] Ad-Dārimī 2:470

[939] Ad-Dārimī 2:470

[940] Proverbs 24: 13

[941] Song of Solomon 4:11

[942] Judges 14:8-9. According to the Bible, Samson was an ancient Israelite who was given supernatural strength by God to combat his enemies and perform heroic feats. Despite his supernatural strength, Samson had two vulnerabilities; his attraction to

NON-DIETARY APHRODISIACS

Amongst the non-dietary aphrodisiacs related from the Prophet ﷺ are:

*Ablution (*Ghusl*)*

Muslim and al-Ḥākim narrate that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "When one of you approaches his wife and wants to return to her he should perform *ghusl* as it revitalises him upon his return."[943]

Henna

Anas ؓ, the Companion of the Prophet ﷺ said, "Dye yourself with henna, for surely henna is rejuvenating, and makes a man handsome, and compels him to sexual intercourse."[944]

Abū Rāfi ʿ said, "I was seated once in the house of the Prophet ﷺ. He passed his hand over his head and said, "Make use of henna, the best of dyes, for henna strengthens the skin and increases sexual energy."[945]

Poetry

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "A part of poetry increases coition."[946]

Shaving Pubic hair

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said, "Among the Prophetic traditions is the one that shaving the pubic hair stimulates intercourse:[947] "Trimming the pubic hair increases in coition."[948]

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untrustworthy women and his hair, without which he was powerless.

[943] Muslim; al-Ḥākim

[944] As-Suyuti (translated by Ahmad Thomson), 2009, p. 19

[945] As-Suyuti (translated by Ahmad Thomson), 2009, p. 19

[946] Abū Nu ʿaym in *aṭ-Ṭibb*; as-Suyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p.75

[947] Abū Nu ʿaym has transmitted this *ḥadīth*

[948] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p.121

CHAPTER 13

Sensual Massage (*tadlīk*)

"When you enter upon your wife, be gentle! be gentle!"[949]

PIONEERING SEXOLOGISTS Dr. William Masters and Dr. Virginia Johnson developed the concept of sensate focus, which later sexologists such as Dr. Douglas E. Rosenau elaborated upon as various sensual massage (*tadlīk*) techniques to enhance the lovemaking experience. Sensual massage has been shown to have profound effects on the person giving the massage as well as on the person receiving it.

Sensate Focus

Sensate focus is a series of specific exercises for couples in which each in turn pays increased attention to their own senses. Originally developed by Masters and Johnson to assist couples experiencing sexual problems, sensate focus can also be used to heighten a couple's personal awareness of each other. The purpose of the touching is not to be sexual but to establish an awareness of sensations by noticing textures, temperatures and contours while touching, or to simply be aware of the sensations of being touched by their partner.

They wrote, "Sensate focus is intended to be an experience in itself, not a prelude to 'sex' or a form of foreplay ... By removing the 'goal' of sexual encounters, the couple learns to heighten their awareness of a broader range of stimuli that include all of the senses"[950]

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[949] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153

[950] De Villers, 2005, pp. i-v

BENEFITS OF SENSATE FOCUS:

- Better awareness of your lover's body, as well as your own
- Control of sexual desire
- Discovering new types of touch
- Enhances your ability as a sensual lover to give and receive nurturing touch
- Heightened sexual excitement
- Increases comfort with physical intimacy
- Increases a shared sense of partnership and intimacy
- Overcome sexual problems like performance anxiety, premature ejaculation, lack of orgasm and erectile dysfunction
- Spine-tingling sensations
- Sensate focus consists of each participant having a specific role, either actively touching (giving) or passively touched (receiving).

THE ACTIVE TOUCHER

In sensate focus, the active partner touches the passive partner in ways that feel good to the one touching. This is oriented toward individual pleasure and sensuality, not the partner's desires. The person touching focuses only on personal feelings and their enjoyment of their mate's body.

They should experiment with a variety of touches and strokes on any area other than the genitals and breasts. It is often helpful to start with the person who is being touched lying on his or her stomach. The active partner begins at the top of the head and slowly works their way down to the feet. The passive partner rolls over, and the work continues from feet to the head. It is best not to have any communication at this point but to revel in individual sensations. If the active partner is aware of areas of the body that their partner does not like to have touched, in love and respect they should stay away from those areas.

THE PASSIVE TOUCHEE

The other half of sensate focus involves the person being touched, who lies passively and allows the active partner to touch their body. Often the touches that are pleasurable to the active partner are also stimulating and pleasurable to the passive one too. The passive partner can increase self-awareness by noticing which areas and types of touching give the greatest pleasure. They can ask for these to be repeated later while making love. The person being touched is also learning about the lover – what kind of touching and strokes the person touching usually enjoys to give and receive.

Basic Massage Techniques

In his groundbreaking book, *A Celebration of Sex: A Guide to Enjoying God's Gift of Sexual Intimacy*, licensed psychologist and Christian sex-therapist Dr. Douglas Rosenau identified five basic massage techniques for couples to enhance their lovemaking experience:

I. STROKING

The stroking technique is essentially long gentle movements with the hands along a portion of the body. Keeping the fingers together, thumbs parallel and palms in full contact with the body part the active partner massages. Stroking is a common massage technique, which is pleasurable on most areas of the body. There are seven variations of stroking motions:

A *Fan stroking.*

1. Start with hands together and move them upward, applying pressure with the palms and heels of your hands as you lean into the stroke.
2. Maintain gentle pressure as you mould hands to body and slide them up the abdomen and lower back.
3. Fan hands out and lessen pressure as you glide them down and around the sides.
4. With light pressure move hands back into position to begin the stroke again.

B *Circle stroking*

5. Make a continuous circular motion with hands rotating in a wide curve, with firmer pressure on the upward stroke.
6. One hand does a complete circle, and the other hand crosses over in a half circle.

C *Alternate stroking*

7. One hand strokes upward while the other hand glides downward in alternating motions – the upward stroke can be firmer as you vary pressure.

D *Sequential stroking*

8. Stroke one hand soothingly down the area, followed immediately by the other in a rhythmic, pawing sequence as you lift the lower hand and begin again.

E *Thumb stroking*

9. Place your thumbs on the sides of the spine and slowly move them up and back down with firm, even pressure.

10. Using only the thumbs, apply pressure on an area in small, firm, circular movements.

11. Stroke upward with one thumb and fan outward as you begin stroking upward a little higher with the other thumb and fan outward, repeating the sequence along the limb.

F *Friction stroking*

12. Circle leg with hands placed side by side and create friction with firm pressure and alternate hand strokes.

G *Brush stroking*

13. With fingertips or the entire hand, sensitise the skin by very lightly brushing an area of the body – often used at the end of massaging a given part of the body.

2. KNEADING

Kneading is a technique that can be used on large fleshy areas of the body such as the soft tissue of the lower back and the buttocks, as well as smaller fleshy areas such as shoulders, thighs and calves. Kneading relaxes the muscles as it stimulates blood circulation. In order to massage the deeper muscles, firm pressure should be applied; to sensuously stimulate the skin, light pressure should be applied.

- To knead, place hands on the area and squeeze and roll the flesh between the thumb and fingers of one hand as the other hand and fingers apply pressure.
- Then glide the hand, grasping the flesh toward the pressure of the other hand. Release and grasp the flesh with the other hand as you repeat the motion with that hand. Rhythmically squeeze, push, and release as you knead with alternating hands.

3. KNUCKLING

The knuckling technique consists of applying small circular strokes to create a pleasant rippling effect. The knuckling technique is particularly effective on the back, shoulders and chest. It can also be enjoyed on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet.

- Curl your fingers into loose fists, keeping the middle joints of the fingers against the skin. Now ripple your fingers around in a small, circular motion.

4. PUMMELLING

The important part of this technique, whether you are using a loose fist or relaxed hand, is to use bouncy motions and not strike the flesh. Pull your hand away as soon as it touches the skin so that there is no bruising pressure. It helps to keep wrists loose and hands and fingers relaxed so that you can hear them slapping together, and the motion should be brisk. Sometimes pummelling might be better kept until the end of the massage, although it can be relaxing if done more gently. It is great for fleshy areas like the back or thighs, where there are heavier muscles.

5. PASSIVE TOUCHING

You don't always have to actively stroke or massage a body area. Simply placing a hand on a spot as the partner's body feels the warmth or pressure (if applied) feels good, as tissue is stimulated by the passive touch. Passive touch also includes pulling or rotating a part of the body to loosen up and exercise joints without actively stroking.

Sensuous Massage Techniques

Sensuous or erotic massage is the use of massage techniques to enhance sexual arousal. Sensuous massage is a wonderful way to build intimacy and closeness with your spouse. Some of the sensuous massage techniques to enhance the lovemaking experience that Dr. Rosenau mentioned are presented below:

1. CIRCULAR SENSUALITY

Begin a gentle, circular stroking of the chest area, starting at the collarbone and shoulder area. Use both hands in a wide, circular motion. Slowly, an inch at a time, lower the circle and massage down over the abdomen, over the pubic area, until the movements are circling the genital area with the top end of the circle on the public bone and the lower end over the thighs. Now start the circle, moving back up to the upper chest again. This can be very arousing visually and sensually as you allow your hands to follow the contours of the body with fingers and palms lightly caressing. Don't linger on nipples or the genital area – just maintain rhythmic, sensual motions.

2. KNEADING

Have your partner lie on his or her stomach, and begin with a kneading motion on the left thigh, starting at the knee and working up over the buttocks to the lower back. Now sensuously knead the right thigh in the same fashion. Have your partner roll over, and knead from knee to pelvic bone. Do this softly, but squeeze the flesh in a full way that manipulates the thigh and genital area as you knead.

3. INTIMATE FAN STROKING

Have your partner lie on his or her stomach, and stand (if your partner is on a table) or kneel between your partner's legs, facing the buttocks. Begin with the palms of your hands on the calf of the back of one leg (placed slightly toward the inner part of the leg) and fingers pointing upward toward the buttocks. Slowly push up with the heel of the palm in a firm stroke and do a fan motion with your fingers up over the leg to the outer side and back down. Slowly work your way up the thighs toward the buttocks, an inch or two at a time, as you repeat the fan motion until the top of the stroke is fanning gently down over the outer back/abdomen and hip area. Then treat the other leg.

4. SENSUAL STROKING

Sit or stand beside your partner, who is lying face down, and do a sequential stroke beginning at the left knee and working your way up almost in a wavelike motion – gently stroking the inner thigh in a hand-over-hand sensuous rhythm that is relaxing and erotically arousing. You can continue this sequential stroking in a sideways fashion up over the buttocks area and the back. Switch to the right side and come back down to the knee. Have your partner roll over. Begin at the top of the chest and work down the side of the body over the abdomen, pubic area, and inner thighs. Switch sides and repeat from thighs up to the chest.

5. SKIN TINGLES

Have your partner lie on his or her stomach. Start at the base of the skull with one hand and slowly move it, hardly touching the skin, in one continuous brush-stroke, down the body to the ankles and very softly back up, conforming to the contours of the body. Repeat several times, going down the right and left sides of the body. Now with your fingertips, lightly stroke all over the body as the skin tingles.

Have your mate roll over and face up. Do small, circular motions lightly with both hands over the whole body from face to feet for several minutes. Hardly touch the skin, with very light strokes on the chest, breasts, abdomen, shoulders, thighs, legs and hands – the whole front of the body. This exercise is very sensually arousing and can awaken and stimulate the skin. Finish by lightly stroking with the fingertips.[951]

SENSUOUS MASSAGE TIPS

- Create a sensual ambience with dim lights, erotic incense, rose petals, and soothing music
- Concentrate on pleasing your spouse and not your own sexual gratification
- Ensure hands are clean and nails are trimmed
- Initially focus on tense areas and the non-erogenous zones to build up anticipation
- Keep hands warm
- Make sure the room temperature is comfortable
- Make use of massage oils
- Patience is the key to giving a romantic massage
- Relax your mind and let your conscience be free
- Use a hard surface like a table or a hard mat to perform the massage

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[951] See Douglas E. Rosenau's *A Celebration of Sex*,

CHAPTER 14

Foreplay *(mulāʿabah)*

"YOU COULD PLAY with her, and she could play with you." [952] Foreplay (*mulā ʿabah*) is a necessary prelude to lovemaking, particularly for women. There are various forms of foreplay which couples should partake in prior to actual penetration.

Mental Foreplay

Mental foreplay, also known as mental stimulation, is the psychological and emotional stimulation that takes place to arouse sexual desire. Mental foreplay is a crucial component of the lovemaking experience, again most particularly for women. Indeed women crave emotional intimacy and verbal affirmation. Because of this, the Prophet ﷺ advised men, "Treat women well! For woman was created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is its top. If you attempt to straighten it, you will break it, but if you leave it, its crookedness will remain there. So treat women well!"[953]

The wisdom in the words of the Prophet ﷺ encompasses the psychological as well as the physical aspect of good treatment. This is of particular importance in the female arousal process. For men sex is sex but for women, it is everything else. For them, sex is as much an emotional experience as it is a physical one.[954] Indeed, the mind is a powerful aphrodisiac and mental foreplay is a vital component in awakening female desire.[955] Relaxation and concentration help the brain process the pleasures the body is experiencing, thus increasing the joy of sexual relations. It is imperative to be in a loving state of mind to fully enjoy the benefits of foreplay. Neuropsychological studies have shown that men and women's brains and hormones are configured differently. Men are quickly aroused by visual sexual stimuli, whereas women are generally aroused when they feel secure and are mentally at ease.

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[952] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5245, 5247, an-Nasāʾī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 3219, 3220, 3226, at-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 1100. In another narration by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Why, don't you like virgins and playing with them?" Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*, 5080

[953] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ*, 3331 and Muslim, *Kitāb ar-riḍāʿ*, 1468

[954] Men rue not having sex with more women, while many women experience postcoital regret after 'casual sex' encounters, according to a study published by psychologists

Robin Summers wrote, "It's beautiful when you find someone that is in love with your mind. Someone that wants to undress your conscience and make love to your thoughts. Someone that wants to watch you slowly take down all the walls you've built up around your mind and let them inside."[956]

Tenderness and attentiveness may be more erotic to women than great lovemaking techniques. For men, physical sexual activity leads to emotional closeness, whereas for women, emotional closeness opens the door to physical sexual activity. It is unfortunate how many men neglect mental and emotional foreplay. A man who can make love to a woman's mind is far more successful in maintaining her love and desire than one who focuses primarily on the physical aspect of sexual play.

It has been well said:

"Seduce my mind and you can have my body.
Find my soul and I am yours forever."

A wise woman said, "As a woman, I can tell you that everything starts and ends in the mind for us, be it sex, love or how we dress. If you want to please a woman, you need to start by understanding her mind and making her feel like she has a warm and special place in your mind and in your heart."

A good husband will embrace the challenge of seduction and adapt to his wife's emotional need of foreplay with spontaneity and improvisation.

SEDUCTION (*IGHRĀ'*)

Seduction is the process of deliberately drawing a person into sexual activity. Derived from the Latin word *seducere* meaning to 'lead astray,' the term has both positive and negative connotations. The negative

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at the University of Texas and University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Galperin, et al, 2012, pp. 1145-1161

[955] Paget, 2000, p. 16

[956] Summers, 2014, p. 73

connotations of seduction involve deceit and manipulation, whereas the positive connotation of the term is that it is synonymous with the act of charming someone. Seduction is more mental and emotional than it is physical, involving coquetry (*ghunj*), flirtation (*shawl*) and other acts of persuasion. For the purpose of this book, when seduction is used, it refers to it in a positive sense.

Voltaire has it that, "It is not enough to conquer, one must also know how to seduce."[957]

The art of seduction should be learned and refined in order to enhance the lovemaking experience for the couple. It is important for men to note that, for a woman, the mind is the largest erogenous zone. A man who is not mentally and emotionally capable of being seductive will experience great difficulties in satisfying his wife's sexual needs. Traditional erotologists were aware that many men lack seductive capabilities, and, in order to improve men's seductive capabilities and enhance their lovemaking experience, they spoke at great length on the desirable qualities that women seek in men.[958]

Once a man wanted to know how to please his wife, so he went to visit a sage who was experienced in the art of coition and asked, "Where is the best place to make love to a woman?" "In her mind," the sage replied. The man asked, "And how do I achieve this?" The sage replied, "By mastering the art of seduction."

Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī said that az-Zamkhasharī narrated in *Rabīʿ al-abrār* that someone asked, "Who is the best of women?" The answer was, "The chaste woman who guards her private parts and is sensual with her husband."[959]

It has been said quite correctly that, "A gentleman seduces his lady's mind before he touches her body."

And, "If you kiss her mind her body will follow."

And, "A man who knows how to seduce his wife will live a happy life."

And, "Knowing how to touch her without touching her really touches her."

And, "The hunt is always better when your queen is just as hungry."

And, "The sexiest thing a man can do to his woman is crawl inside her mind and make her imagination run wild."

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[957] Francois-Marie Arouet, commonly known as Voltaire, was a French writer and philosopher from the eighteenth century

[958] The desirable qualities of men are enumerated in chapter ten.

[959] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 145

Verbal Foreplay

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Some eloquence is magic."[960]

Verbal foreplay can be subtle or it can be direct. Sometimes sweet words are required, and at other times more explicit terms. A man who is well versed in verbal foreplay knows when to call his woman sexy and when to let her know that she is beautiful. The importance of verbal foreplay in arousing a woman cannot be over-emphasised. Underlining its importance, the Prophet ﷺ told men to shower their wives with loving compliments prior to engaging in actual intercourse, when he said, "One of you should not fulfil one's [sexual] need with one's wife like an animal, rather there should be between them foreplay of kissing and sweet words."[961]

For women, communication is everything. Sweet words are the key to unlocking her heart and arousing her. Words are indeed powerful, and verbal foreplay is one of the things which will help a man attain a woman's love, as Ibn Kemal Pesha narrated in an anecdote:

The King asked Barjān and Ḥabāḥib, "Inform me of the thing which women love best about men?" They said, "Beautiful words and long embrace." He asked, "And what is it that establishes love in women's hearts?" They said, "Foreplay before intercourse and cuddling after ejaculation."[962]

In Proverbs there is, "Kind words are like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for the body."[963]

The Psalms have it that, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth."[964]

The Song of Songs has:

> My beloved speaks and says to me:
> "Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
> and come away,
> for behold, the winter is past;
> the rain is over and gone."[965]

Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood said, "A husband's duty is to convince his wife that he does love her - and this can only be done by word (constantly repeated word, I might add - such is the irritating nature of women!), and by looking and touching."[966]

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[960] Al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb an-nikāḥ*; 5146, Mālik, *Kitāb al-kalām*, 1820

[961] Ad-Daylamī, Musnad al-Firdaws, 2/55; as-Suyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 154 and 259

[962] Ibn Kemal Pesha, 2010, p. 146

[963] Proverbs 16: 24

[964] Psalm 119:103

[965] Song of Solomon 2 10-11

How apt the saying is, "A man falls in love through his eyes; a woman falls in love through her ears." There is much truth in the adage, as men tend to be visual creatures, becoming aroused at the mere sight of an attractive female, whilst in contrast, women are more aural and tactile, desiring to hear words of seduction. Any man can have sex with a woman, but it takes someone special to make love to her with his words. The art of verbal foreplay is one which all great lovers possess, as American writer Marya Mannes said, "All great lovers are articulate and verbal seduction is the surest road to actual seduction."[967]

ADVICE FOR MEN

- Look at her eyes with desire and tell her how beautiful she is, in order to make her feel that she is the most beautiful woman in the world.
- Conversation is crucial to engendering her sexual love. Listen attentively to her when she is speaking. At times, listening can be more important than talking. Do not assume that you know what she is thinking, try to understand how she is feeling.
- In order to increase her sexual desire, whisper seductive words in a controlled deep voice prior to actual penetration.
- Ravish her with words and be creative with wordplay.
- Stimulate her mind before you penetrate her body.
- Feed her imagination with desire by painting great pictures of how you plan to make love to her. Tell her how you will slowly undress her while caressing each body part.
- Describe in vivid detail what you are going to do to her body.
- Tell her about things you love about her, paying particular attention to small things, because, for women, they often matter most.
- Make use of compliments and affectionate nicknames. The more a woman is complimented, the more it will make her feel sexy and attractive.
- To arouse her desire, sweet words alone are not enough. They must be said sincerely to have an impact on the heart.
- Some women find a good conversation more erotic than sexual talk or actual foreplay. Speak to her about anything besides sex, but in a sensual manner to arouse her hidden sexual desire.

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[966] Maqsood, 2009, p. 126

[967] Crain Bakos, 2006, p. 15

- Emotional seductiveness – raise her interest in you by making her feel warm inside with random acts of spontaneity to make her adrenaline rush.

ADVICE FOR WOMEN

Ibn Falīta said, "Coquetry lies in the woman's ability to address the man sweetly, smile at him, look at him with quiet eyes, bend her body and her limbs in an exciting manner, feel impatient without looking bored and sigh without real pain. Describing one aspect of coquetry, a poet said:

In sexual union I like
Your exciting words and silent looks."

An-Nafzāwī said, "Coquetry should also be accompanied by alternate bites and kisses because this will strengthen the man's sexual desire so much that he would copulate with her once more. This is particularly so when the woman has ceased to become ashamed and started to behave lewdly at the time of sexual intercourse. Such shamelessness and lewdness are regarded as good female qualities. The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is reported to have said about this, 'The best of wives is the one who takes off the dress of modesty when she undresses and puts on the dress of modesty when she dresses.'"[968]

Physical Foreplay

Once a couple are psychologically prepared and in the mood for sex, they should proceed to physical foreplay. Physical foreplay includes all physical sexual acts short of actual penetration. Without foreplay, the female sexual organs will not engorge with blood, and touching the genital area can be uncomfortable or even painful for women.[969] Thus it is incumbent upon the man to master the various forms of foreplay to ensure his wife receives sexual satisfaction. We will now look at three of the most essential components of physical foreplay: kissing, fondling and embrace. Oral stimulation is considered a form of foreplay but it will be dealt with in the following chapter.

KISSING (*TAQBĪL*)

Women enjoy variety in kissing, and the mouth can be extremely sensuous. Whether practising butterfly kisses, gently sucking, warm connecting kisses or deep passionate kisses, erotologists have advised couples to master the art of kissing to heighten sexual foreplay. Passionate kissing is not only an essential art of foreplay but it is also from the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. ʿĀ'ishah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would suck his wives' tongues whilst kissing them.[970]

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[968] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 42. We have been unable to trace the source of this *ḥadīth*.

[969] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, p.33

He ﷺ said, "None of you should fall upon his wife like an animal, but let there first be a messenger between you." "And what is that messenger?" they asked. The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Kisses and [sweet] words."[971] Commenting on this prophetic tradition, British Muslim writer Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood said, "These 'kisses and words' do not just include foreplay once intimacy has commenced. To set the right mood, little signals should begin well in advance, so that the wife has a clue as to what is coming, and is pleasantly expectant, and also has adequate time to make herself clean, attractive and ready. As regards intimacy itself, all men know that they cannot achieve sexual fulfilment if they are not aroused. They should also realise that it is actually harmful and painful for the female organs to be used for sex without proper preparation."[972]

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said, "Among the necessary preliminaries of intercourse is that the man must fondle the woman, kiss her, and kiss heavily. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to fondle and kiss his womenfolk."[973]

As-Ṣuyuṭī said in *The Book of Exposition in the Science of Complete and Perfect Coition*, "Do not forget to practise kissing and cuddling, the interlocking of leg with leg, and to suck with delicate lips; at which time the mount now bites with passion and rapturous kisses, and then pats and taps with his sword-like weapon, which anon he draws forth, but only again to thrust into the expectant sheath, seeking out all the nooks and crannies, and holes and corners, whilst not losing sight of the walls of the roof!"[974]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "Without kissing, no kind of position or movement procures the fullest pleasure; and those positions in which the kiss is not practicable are not entirely satisfactory, considering that the kiss is one of the most powerful stimulants to the work of love. The kiss is assumed to be an integral part of coition. The best kiss is the one impressed on humid lips combined with the suction of the lips and tongue, which latter particularly provokes the flow of sweet and fresh saliva. It is for the man to bring this about by slightly and softly nibbling his partner's tongue, when her saliva will flow sweet and exquisite, more pleasant than refined honey, and which will not mix with the saliva of her mouth. This manoeuvre will give the man a trembling sensation, which will run all through his body, and is more intoxicating than wine-drinking to excess."[975]

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[970] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 155

[971] Al-Kawtharī, 2008, p. 57; This *ḥadīth* has a weak chain of transmission. Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī narrated that this tradition was said by Anas and not, as reported by ad-Daylamī in *Musnad al-Firdaws*, the Prophet ﷺ. Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 154

[972] Waris Maqsood, 2009, pp. 124-125

[973] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 1998, pp. 183-190; Abū Dāwūd

[974] aṣ-Ṣuyuṭī, 1987, p. 8

Ibn Falīta said, "In fact, human beings are the only creatures who kiss and embrace each other. Kissing and embracing are so pleasurable for some lovers that they substitute them for intercourse."[976]

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba said, "For nothing can beat a good kiss as a prelude to love. [Sheikh an-Nafzāwī says], 'The kiss is a savour-some thing, like those delicacies intended to stimulate the appetite, but which must be followed by more substantial fare that nourishes a man's body.' There is an art of kissing and even an entire gamut in that art [as an-Nafzāwī explains]: 'First on the cheeks, then on the lips, finally on the breasts, which one thus arouses into turgescence; then one descends lower to the belly, to the sweet convexity; the tongue is skilfully inserted in the crater of the navel, then into another more intimate one...There is an art in bringing women's sensuality to the point of effervescence that leads to perfect bliss. One must not be hasty, but carry out all the formalities, which are so many necessary stages to complete pleasure. Pleasure must be reciprocal if it is really to be the great festival of the senses; the man who is concerned only with coming himself, without at the same time getting the woman to come is a poor wretch who wastes his virile strength."[977]

A man asked a wise man who was experienced in the art of love-making, "What is the best way to kiss my wife?" The wise man replied, "Push her up against a wall with her arms above her head and kiss her passionately like you mean it!"

Someone said, "A kiss is an upper persuasion for a lower invasion."

Cuddle her, play with her and kiss her on the forehead. Remind her that you love her and you're not going anywhere.

The following conversation is reported between a husband and wife:

Husband: "What kind of kiss do you like?"

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[975] Sheikh an-Nafzāwī (translated by Richard Burton), 2010, pp.68-69

[976] Ibn Falīta, 1977. p. 82

[977] Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 154

Wife: "The kind of kiss that takes my breath away, makes my skin feel like electricity and leaves me feeling dizzy and drunk."

Amongst the benefits of kissing that science writer Sheril Kirshenbaum found during the research for her work *The Science of Kissing: What Our Lips Are Telling Us,* is that, "A passionate kiss can also raise our level of serotonin, which leads to obsessive thoughts about the kissing partner. Scientists have observed that serotonin levels in subjects involved in new relationships look a lot like those in patients suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder. Kissing also stimulates adrenaline, which helps our bodies to anticipate what might occur next. It boosts our heart rate, which reduces stress, and can make us break into a sweat. In other words, the body's chemical response to a good kiss mirrors many of the same feelings frequently associated with falling in love."

FONDLING (*LAMS*)

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Every game a Muslim man plays is futile (*bāṭil*) except for archery, training one's horse and playing with one's wife, for they are real."[978]

An-Nawawi said, "It is permissible that he masturbates with the hand of his wife, just as he may enjoy her entire body."[979]

Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib said, "To excite a woman sexually, a man should rub her nipples, this way brings about a wonderful effect!"[980]

A group of women asked the Thousander (*Alfiyyah*),[981] "What does a man have to do in order to capture a woman's heart?" She said, "He should be playful prior to coitus and shudder before ejaculation (*firāgh*)."[982]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "When you feel the desire for intimacy, you will both find it more agreeable to perfume yourselves first. Engage in foreplay with your wife in bed, caress and kiss her and lick her all over, on her front and her back, until you see desire quicken in her eyes. Then position yourself between her legs, insert your penis into her vagina – and do it. Foreplay beforehand will make it much more enjoyable for the two of you [as well as being gentler on your stomach]."[983]

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[978] At-Tirmidhī, no. 1637; Ibn Mājah, no. 2811

[979] An-Nawawī, the *Rawḍa*, book of *Nikāḥ*, chapter on the rights of the husband in *istimtāʿ* (sexual enjoyment).

[980] Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, p. 322

[981] In reference to the number of men she was reported to have had intercourse with.

[982] Newman, 2014, p. 34

[983] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, p. 34

Dr. Hedaya Hartford, author of *Initiating and Upholding an Islamic Marriage*, writes, "For women, sexual intercourse is not necessarily an expression of love. It is essential that men understand that a wife needs to feel she is her husband's sweetheart and not merely a means for his sexual pleasure. This is not to say that she does not have a need for sexual fulfilment, but that consistent tenderness is usually equally important to a wife, and essential to the overall harmony of a healthy sexual relationship."[984]

Kalyana Malla, author of *Ananga Ranga* said, "A woman is [like] a delicious instrument, when artfully played upon, she is capable of producing the most exquisite harmony."[985]

EMBRACE (ʿINĀQ)

Embrace is part of the art of sexual love whose various types the author of *Kama Sutra* explains: "Now the embrace which indicates the mutual love of a man and woman who have come together is of four kinds: touching, rubbing, piercing and pressing. The action in each case is denoted by the meaning of the word which stands for it. When a man under some pretext or other goes in front or alongside of a woman and touches her body with his own, it is called the 'touching embrace.' When a woman in a lonely place bends down, as if to pick up something, and pierces, as it were, a man sitting or standing, with her breasts, and the man in return takes hold of them, it is called a 'piercing embrace.' The above two kinds of embrace take place only between persons who do not, as yet, speak freely with each other. When two lovers are walking slowly together, either in the dark, or in a place of public resort, or in a lonely place, and rub their bodies against each other, it is called a 'rubbing embrace.' When on the above occasion one of them presses the other's body forcibly against a wall or pillar, it is called a 'pressing embrace.' These two last embraces are peculiar to those who know each other's intentions."[986]

Ibn Falīta said, "Women like to be embraced strongly and firmly, especially when they are about to achieve an orgasm or when the man is about to achieve an orgasm."

A proverb has it that, "A kiss without a hug is like a flower without fragrance."

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[984] Hartford, 2007, p.156

[985] Burton, 1991, p. 68

[986] Burton, 1991, pp. 37-38

BENEFITS OF EMBRACING

People want to feel understanding and empathy from others. Non-verbal communication can be a very powerful way of informing your partner that you understand how they feel. Scientific research has shown that embrace in the form of cuddling and hugging has many physical and psychological benefits, some of which are:

- Increases levels of oxytocin (the bonding hormone)
- Reduces levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) and anxiety amongst women
- Releases endorphins (the feel good hormone) into the blood stream
- Releases dopamine (the pleasure hormone) which increases sexual desire

EROGENOUS ZONES

Also known as pleasure points, erogenous zones are areas of the human body that have heightened sensitivity, the stimulation of which arouses sexual desire. Whilst both men and women have some erogenous zones in common, women have more. Below there are some tips on the stimulation of some erogenous body parts in men and women.

The Anterior Fornix Erogenous Zone (AFE also known as the A-spot) – The A-spot is located in an area on the anterior of the vaginal wall near the cervix. If stimulated on a regular basis, the A-spot is said to increase lubrication, and can lead to rapid vaginal lubrication and arousal, often resulting in an intense orgasm.

Back – Soft kissing and running the tongue along the length of the spine is effective in increasing arousal. Various massage techniques, such performing a slow back-rub and thumb-pressing, can also increase blood flow to the genital areas. Massaging the two pleasure points above the spine known as 'back dimples'[987] also releases tension and increases blood flow to the pelvic region.

Back of the knees – The skin behind the knees is very responsive to touch because the nerves are close to the surface. So light kissing and licking of this area can be highly sensual for your spouse.

Breasts – Work from the outer breasts to the inner breasts for enhanced pleasure. Run your fingertips very lightly along the crease where her breast meets her rib cage and follow up with a gentle lick along the same area. Use your fingers very gently to wander all over each breast in a variety of strokes making sure to cover the nipple. Put your hands underneath her breasts and massage them in even movements whilst squeezing lightly.

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[987] Also known as the 'dimples of Venus' or 'Venusian dimples'. The back dimples are symmetrical indentions sometimes visible on the lower back. The dimples are a pleasurable erogenous zone for some women.

Buttocks – Commence with caressing the buttocks lightly until your spouse becomes more aroused then start to squeeze firmly. Some women like a tender but firm spank every so often during foreplay to increase arousal.

Clitoris – The clitoris (*baẓr*) is the most sensitive female erogenous zone. In fact it is the only organ in the human body which has been designed solely for sexual pleasure. The clitoris is known as the powerhouse of the female orgasm, yet many men are ignorant about this wonderful erogenous zone. Sadly most men know more about what's under the hood a car than what's under the hood of a clitoris! Male insecurities, laziness. and the fear of the unknown are common reasons why men tend to neglect the stimulation of the clitoral region.

A woman's clitoris can be stimulated through direct or indirect contact. Indirect stimulation of the clitoris usually takes place via penetrative intercourse. During intercourse the penis does not contact the clitoris directly. It is the thrusting of the penis in the vagina which moves the *labia minora* against the clitoris, thus creating orgasm. Direct stimulation of the clitoris can be performed with finger or tongue. As there is a great variability in clitoral sensitivity amongst women, some find great discomfort in the stimulation of the clitoris with the finger. For these women, rubbing or licking of the area around the clitoris is likely to feel more pleasurable. Other women enjoy very intense direct stimulation. In general, the clitoris reacts best to being teased, so you want to lick it and suck on it a little, build a little tension, then back off on it a bit before going at it again. It is much better to rub the clitoral hood or to rub along the side of the clitoris than it is to go straight for the head of it.

The Sinclair Institute stated that the following occurs when a woman's clitoris is aroused, "When a woman becomes sexually aroused, both the glans and the shaft fill with blood and increase in size. The glans can double in diameter. There is no evidence that a larger clitoris means more intense sexual arousal.

"As erotic stimulation continues and orgasm approaches, the clitoris becomes less visible as it is covered by the swelling of tissues of the clitoral hood. This swelling is designed to protect the clitoris from direct contact, which, for some women, can be more irritating than pleasurable. It moves out again when the stimulation stops.

"After orgasm the clitoris returns to its normal size within about ten minutes because the orgasm leads to a dispersal of the accumulated blood. If the woman doesn't have an orgasm, the blood that has flowed into the clitoris as a result of sexual arousal may remain there, keeping the clitoris engorged for a few hours. Many women find this uncomfortable."

Ears – Light kissing around the ear, nibbling the earlobe, occasional licking outside of the ear, blowing in the ear and making erotic sounds in the ear. Using the thumb and index finger, massage the outer part of the ear, moving in slow but firm circles. Do this on both ears at the same time, working your way down to the earlobe. When you arrive at the earlobe, gently squeeze each lobe and give them a careful tug downwards.

Elbow – The inside curve of the elbow is a sensual spot for some that often goes unnoticed. Plant soft kisses on this delicate area whilst using your hands to massage other erogenous zones.

Feet – There is an acupressure point between the ankle bone and the Achilles tendon which is said to help restore sexual energy. Give a sensual foot-massage and then follow it by slipping your tongue in between and around each of the toes before taking it in your mouth.

The Gräfenberg spot (G-spot)[988] – An area of heightened sensitivity that intensifies when stimulated. The area of the G-spot is located near the anterior of the front wall of the vagina about halfway between the back of the pubic bone and the cervix. The area is easy to palpate if a woman lies on her back and her partner inserts his two fingers into the vagina using the "come here" motion with his forefinger and middle finger.

Hair – Run your fingers through her hair, gripping it in your hand. Women love their hair being played with and stroked. It is a very caring and intimate gesture which makes her feel loved and secure.

Hands – Lightly graze the inside of the wrists with your fingers and tongue.

Head – Gently massage the scalp to create an exhilarating experience.

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[988] The G-spot was 'discovered' in the late twentieth century by American sexologists John Perry and Beverly Whipple. Perry and Whipple named it the 'Gräfenberg spot' in honour of German gynaecologist Dr. Ernst Gräfenberg, but it is commonly known as the 'G spot'. It is located along the sub-urethral surface of the anterior vaginal wall. It is more of a zone than a spot. Caressing and pressing lightly on the area can lead to intense sexual arousal and orgasms. While sensitive to stimulation, but without nearly as many nerve endings as the clitoral head, the G-spot generally responds to a more persistent, massaging pressure. It is not uncommon for a woman to feel a fleeting urge to urinate when this area is stimulated. Kerner, 2010, pp. 51-52

A head massage can release endorphins, which increases sexual pleasure. The forehead may also be kissed as it is considered to be one of the most intimate and romantic gestures a man can show to the woman he loves.

Inner thighs – A highly sensitive area where the lightest of touches causes the greatest effect. Planting soft kisses, gently tickles and light licks, creates a powerful sensation.

Lips – When kissing, take your time and change the angle of your head from left to right and vice versa at regular intervals. Take a pause from kissing to gently bite the lower lip with your teeth and carefully tug it.

Legs – Massage the length of the leg from the upper thigh down to the ankles using ointment or massage oils.

Neck – The nape of the neck is best stimulated by a combination of kissing, stroking, sucking and blowing. Start at the nape of the neck and plant a trail of soft, slow kisses from the top of the spine up to the hairline. Then move around to the side of her neck, paying particular attention to the area where the neck meets the shoulders and also the area just underneath the ears.

Nipples – When the nipple is hard and erect, use your tongue to circle around the areola and then gently suck and bite the nipple. After sucking and licking the nipples for some time, blow gently. The contrast in temperature will create a soothing pleasurable experience.

Penis –The male penis is homologous to the female clitoris. It is the most sensitive male erogenous zone. The penis is best stimulated when a woman uses her mouth and tongue along the shaft and glans of the penis.

Perineum (P-spot) – The perineum is an area located between the groin and rectal orifice. The small diamond shaped area is sensitive to slight pressure during stimulation and can produce a wonderful heightened sensation. The perineum is best stimulated with the fingers or tongue.

Stomach – Using your fingertips, tease your partner by slowly stroking the stomach from the hip bone to the top of the pubic region and back up again. The navel is a very sensitive area which should be stimulated with the tongue and fingertips.

The U-spot – The U-spot's name comes from its location just about around the urethral opening of a woman. The U-spot can be stimulated either with the fingers, tongue or penis.

The Vagina – The vagina is often confused with the vulva. The vagina is an elastic, muscular canal with a soft, flexible lining that provides lubrication and sensation. The vulva refers to the female external genital organs, including the labia, clitoria and entrance to the vagina. While the vagina is not especially sensitive as a whole, the anterior wall of the vagina contains the majority of the vaginal nerve endings, making it more sensitive to touch. The vagina can be stimulated with the fingers, tongue or penis but is best stimulated when it is lubricated.

The vagina is commonly referred to as "pussy" by men when speaking amongst themselves or to their woman who likes to hear 'naughty' and explicit speech to arouse her desires. According to an-Nafzawi, "pussy" is the name given to the soft, voluptuous sex organ of a beautiful young woman.[989] The term "pussy," which is also used to refer to sexual intercourse, is regarded as vulgar and offensive to some, but not to others who feel the informal term is more appropriate to use than formal terms such as 'vagina,' 'private parts,' and 'genitalia.' The vagina is an extremely pleasurable erogenous zone; both for the woman who is being stimulated, and the man who stimulates her pussy.

It has been said,"Good pussy tastes sweeter than honey!"

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989 An-Nafzawi (translated by Jim Colville), 1999, p. 47

CHAPTER 15

Oral Stimulation

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah has made excellence (*iḥsān*) in all things obligatory."[990]

COMMONLY REFERRED TO as oral sex, oral stimulation is a type of foreplay in which the mouth or tongue is used to stimulate the genitalia. Oral stimulation of the male genitalia is called fellatio, whilst oral stimulation of the female genitalia is called cunnilingus. Cunnilingus is a combination of the two Latin word's *cunnus* (vulva) and *lingere* (lick). Fellatio comes from the Latin word, *fellare*, meaning to suck. In classical Arabic, the expression *'umṣuṣ baẓr'* (literally translated as sucking the clitoris) was used to refer to cunnilingus.[991] I did not find an equivalent expression for fellatio in classical Arabic during my research.

Oral Stimulation and the Sacred Law

The following Qur'ānic *āyat* was discussed at length by early Muslim jurists regarding the permissibility both of looking at a woman's vagina and of oral stimulation, *"Say to the believers that they should lower their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Allah is aware of what*

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[990] Muslim

[991] An incident which occurred between Abū Bakr, the close Companion of the Prophet ﷺ and later the first Muslim Caliph, and Urwah, an enemy of the Prophet ﷺ illustrates this. Imam al-Bukhārī narrates the story in which ʿUrwah, at the time a polytheist, was insulting the Prophet ﷺ, which caused Abū Bakr, in a fit of anger, to defend the Prophet's honour by saying to ʿUrwah, "*Umṣuṣ baẓr al-Lāt. Anaḥnu nafirru ʿanhu wa nada ʿahu* – Go and suck the clitoris of Lāt! Are we going to desert him and leave him?!" Lāt was a female idol the Arabs used to worship prior to Islam.

they do."[992] Regarding this *āyat*, thirteenth century Andalusian scholar Abdullāh al-Qurṭubī said, "The scholars have two positions concerning the permissibility of a man looking at a woman's pudendum. One is that it is permissible, because if it is permissible for him to enjoy it then it is permissible *a fortiori* to look at it. It was also said that it is impermissible because of the *ḥadīth* of ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها when she mentioned her state with the Messenger of Allah, 'Neither did I see that part of him nor he of me.'[993] The more correct position is the former, while the latter is understood as good manners (*adab*).[994] One of our scholars [Ibn al-ʿArabi al-Mālikī] cited Aṣbagh as saying, "It is [even] permissible for him to lick it with his tongue!"[995]

The Ḥanbalīs, Mālikīs and Shāfiʿīs are of the opinion that oral stimulation is permissible. The eminent Muslim scholar Dr. Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī said, "Muslim jurists are of the opinion that it is lawful for the husband to perform cunnilingus on his wife, or a wife to perform the similar act for her husband and there is no wrong in doing so. But if sucking leads to releasing semen, then it is blameworthy (*makrūh*), but there is no decisive evidence [to forbid it]."[996]

Despite there being no explicit prohibition of oral stimulation in the Sacred Law, some Arab and Asian Muslims disapprove of the practice due to cultural attitudes towards what is considered 'acceptable sexual practices.'[997]

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[992] An-Nūr 24: 30

[993] The Ḥanbalīs were of the opinion that looking at a women's vagina is prohibited, basing their opinion on a fabricated prophetic tradition in which the Prophet ﷺ was reported to have said, "Looking at the vulva causes one to inherit blindness." Al-Qurṭubī, vol. 2, 2009, p. 333

[994] In addition, some matters of the Sunnah are particular to the Prophet ﷺ and do not apply to the Muslims. Ed.

[995] Al-Qurṭubī, vol. 2, 2009, p. 333

[996] Dr Ali Jum'ah, professor of the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence at Al-Azhar University added that licking, sucking and kissing the spouse's sexual organs are permissible in the Sacred Law, as long as it gives a person sexual gratification. See 'Islam's Stance on Oral Sex' 19 May 2004 on www.islamonline.net.

[997] "The spread of pornography has increased the prevalence of oral sex, and it is now commonly practiced by many couples," said Muhammad ibn Adam al-Kawthari, "It is generally considered contrary to the proper conduct of a Muslim, most contemporary scholars hold this practice to be disliked." Al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 96-98; "Oral sex was not one of the known practices of the early righteous Muslims. In addition, it is known to be the practice of dogs and the disbelievers," said Muhammad al-Jibaly in his book *Closer than Garment*, 2002, p. 50.

Cunnilingus

The tongue is arguably the most versatile sexual organ and is an extremely effective tool in sexual play. For attaining an orgasm and enjoying sexual play, some women actually prefer cunnilingus to intercourse. In many ways the tongue is better than the penis. The more subtle, rhythmic movements of the tongue are more suited to gradual female sexual arousal than the harder penetrative thrusting of the penis. When using the tongue, a man does not have to worry about growing fatigued, has no time constraints and it is effective when hard or soft. Under direct control, the tongue can be manipulated with expert precision to please one's spouse.[998]

Having the right tool is one thing, but knowing how to use it is another. Sex therapist Ian Kerner stated that many women complain woefully about men's oral techniques: the lack of consistent, rhythmic pressure; their roughness and the mad stampede for the clitoris.[999] A skilled cunnilinguist rarely goes unappreciated. Men who are not well versed in the art of cunnilingus should try to master some oral techniques to pleasure their spouses.

Cunnilingus are on the to-do-list for any man who wants to truly pleasure a woman, erotic writer Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib emphasised in his female-friendly book *Encyclopedia of Pleasure*. In one humourous anecdote, Ibn Nāṣir relates:

Hubba al-Madaniyyah, for instance, said that one day she went out of the bath accompanied by a boy who had a puppy. It so happened that the puppy, seeing her vulva and vaginal lips, went between her legs and began to lick her organ. She lowered her body to give the animal a better chance of performing its job. However, when she had reached an orgasm, she fell down heavily upon it and could not raise herself until the helpless animal had died from heavy pressure.[1000]

The aforementioned tradition is not an endorsement by the author for an animal to perform cunnilingus on a woman, rather it was related to illustrate how pleasurable the practice of oral sex is for women. Truth be told, most women love receiving oral stimulation, and find the experience more pleasurable than actual intercourse.

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998 Kerner, 2010, p. 29-30

999 Kerner, 2010, p. 30

1000 Ibn Nasir al-Khatib, 1977, p. 23

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL HYGIENE

Personal hygiene is very important when performing cunnilingus. The vagina should be cleaned with water and preferably scented with perfume or apply honey over the vaginal area. It is also important for the woman to maintain a healthy diet as this will affect the smell and taste of her vagina. Every woman has a slightly different taste which is dependant on many things including natural secretions and arousal fluid. Some women have natural sweet-tasting vaginas, others not so. As for pubic hair, some men prefer a fully-shaven vagina others prefer a hairy vagina for cunnilingus. It is all down to personal preference. However, unclean women with bad diets tend to have foul-smelling vaginas that taste bitter. In contrast, many women who look after their personal hygiene have a sweet-tasting vagina that feels like pillow-soft marshmallows.

CUNNILINGUS TECHNIQUES

Expert cunnilingus requires learning appropriate techniques and then applying them consistently over time in a focused, patient, and loving manner. Most importantly, it requires respecting, sharing and participating wholly in the erotic intimacy of the moment. To be truly effective in cunnilingus it is important for the man to psychologically prepare his spouse for the act and make her feel at ease and assured of her sexuality. He can obtain this by smiling at her whilst performing the act, complimenting her and telling her how sweet she tastes. These minute but crucial acts will not only enable her to relax better but it will also make it easier for her to attain an orgasm. The lack of enthusiasm from a lover can detract a woman's enjoyment of oral sex and ability to orgasm. When a woman suspects that her lover is not enjoying providing cunnilingus, she will not react favourably to the experience. Thus, the man should make her feel that he loves going down on her. Many women think that their genitals look, smell or taste unattractive. In order to persuade her otherwise, he should compliment her by saying things such as "I love how you taste," and "You look so good" to make her feel more comfortable and at ease. Every woman likes compliments, especially from someone they love.[1001]

Some women feel reluctant to discuss their reactions to oral sex. Instead they use body language as a form of communication. They might squirm if they find a certain lick uncomfortable or grab the man's head tightly. Unfortunately, many men do not realise that she's writhing in discomfort, thinking she's actually in the throes of delight. That's why it's important to check in verbally: "Are you enjoying it?" "Is this okay?" "Is this too intense?" You can also ask her if she wants you to stop. No woman will ever tell you to stop or slow down if she is enjoying receiving good oral.

[1001] Kerner, 2010, p. 31, Castleman, 2013

For many women, the gentleness of oral sex is key to its enjoyment. That being the case, a man should be gentle and tender whilst performing oral stimulation. The tongue is much softer than the fingers and penis, so it can provide a greater sensation to the clitoris, which is very sensitive for some women.

Below are some cunnilingus techniques and tips:

1 Begin slowly—and as gently as you can. Start by caressing her inner thighs and then proceed to slowly kiss her inner thighs and the area around her vulva. Anticipation of cunnilingus can feel very arousing for her. Then lick the fleshy outer lips. Next, work your tongue in between the outer lips to caress the inner lips. Then circle the vaginal opening and perhaps insert your tongue inside. Eventually move up to the clitoris.Breathing slowly and sensually around the vulva, will help build up anticipation and increase her sexual desire.

2 Keep lips and tongue moist with saliva. Alternate between slow but rhythmic licking and rapid thrusts. Pay close attention to her response to see what gives her more pleasure and act accordingly. Some women like sensitive touches, others prefer hard thrusts with the tongue, or a mixture of both. Hard thrusts with the tongue to the inner layer of the vagina are extremely pleasurable to women. Soft delicate gently strokes with the tongue inside the vagina before moving up to the clitoris will also be extremely gratifying for her.

3 Place two fingers on the sides of her clitoris in a V-shape to make her 'jewels' stand up and at attention. Then gently tap the tip of her clitoris with the tongue.

4 Alternate using the tip of your tongue, the flat of it, and your lips as you explore her vulva. All three feel a little different and provide subtly different sensations.

5 Feather the tongue softly over the head of the clitoris, going back and forth, to and fro. Then flutter the clitoris with the tongue rapidly as she becomes more aroused.

6 Combine licking with finger and palm massage. After circling her vulva with your tongue, do the same with a finger or two, us-

ing light, moderate, or deep pressure, as the woman prefers. Use your fingers to gently part her lips, and if she's okay with it, insert one or two.

7 Combine cunnilingus with whole body massage. Some women enjoy having their legs, arms, navel, and/or breasts caressed while receiving oral. Try slipping a finger or two into her mouth so she can suck them while you are licking her.

8 Lick the shaft of the clitoris with the flat of the tongue, then with a pointed tongue penetrate the vagina with strong rapid thrusts. When inside the vagina slowly open the tongue.

9 Instead of steady tongue pressure on the clitoris or swirling moves around it, use the tip of your tongue to tease just the underside of the clitoral shaft with light little licks about once every 10 to 15 seconds. This move helps some women get over the hump to orgasm. Her body or legs may tremble and shudder with desire at this point, indicating that she is close to coming. Continue to tease the clitoris when this happens with light licks.

10 Stroke the stomach and inner thighs whilst kissing the vaginal area. Remember to play with her navel as it is a very sensitive area and continue to kiss her lips, the one between her thighs.

11 Perform a combination of licking, sucking and nibbling her labia majora. Do not bite or suck too hard as it can cause pain and discomfort.

12 Lightly suck the clitoris, then twirl your tongue in a circular motion. Then use your top lip to press firmly against the clitoris whilst continuing slow suction with your mouth and at the same time use your index and middle fingers to tickle her vagina.

13 Apply gentle but firm pressure on the clitoral glands and slowly twirl the tongue around the clitoris. Then, after squeezing firmly, caress the clitoris with your fingers.

14 Massage the inside of the upper thigh at the crease where the thigh meets the vagina to heighten pleasure.

15 Directly apply pressure on the perineum whilst going down on your lady to increase the intensity of the orgasm.

16 Pay attention to her moans, verbal cues and body language whilst performing cunnilingus to detect her pleasure point. Once identified, maintain the same steady pace in your licking/thrusting. until she climaxes, Be patient as you do not need to increase the

pressure or speed of your licks or thrusts in order to increase her pleasure or make her climax.

17 Press firmly on the 'back dimples' pleasure spots to increase her pleasure whilst performing oral stimulation. This will increase circulation throughout the pelvis and enhance pleasure.

18 The 'blowing bubbles technique' - The woman should lay flat on her back and spread her legs semi wide. The man should then press his left hand firmly on her stomach but not forcefully. He should slowly and gently run his tongue up and down the shaft of the clitoris whilst blowing short full breaths. Then he should proceed to repeatedly blow short full breaths into her vagina and create bubbles with his mouth into her vagina. This will give her a tingling sensation. Whilst doing this he should also use his fingers from his right hand to massage her clitoral hood.

19 'The figure 8 tongue technique' – Work the sensitive areas around the clitoris in a figure-8 motion. Arouse her with gentle sucking until the little clitoris swells, then carefully expose the area with your fingers. Use the slippery underside of your tongue to circle it to the left and then to the right. With the rougher top side of the tongue, flick from right to left and then up and down. Finally work up to figure 8s, alternating between your tongue's smooth underside and firmer tip. Constantly vary the degrees of pressure you use.

Fellatio

Fellatio is a popular but by no means a universal sexual act. Despite the corpus of erotic treatises from the Arab-Muslim literary genre on the art of coition, which runs the full gamut of erotology, it does not contain much discussion on fellatio, which was prominent in Greek and Roman erotic literature.[1002] Possibly due to pre-modern cultural attitudes and the fact that the readership of classic erotological treatises were predominately heterosexual males, fellatio is conspicuously absent from many of the erotic texts.

FELLATIO TECHNIQUES

To master fellatio, a woman must know how to respond effectively to her husband's sexual responses. Some women may be shy or find difficulties performing fellatio appropriately, so the husband should help his wife by offering encouragement and provide direction in a calm and measured voice. Below are some fellatio techniques for women:

[1002] Newman, 2014, p. 40

1 Nibble the head of the penis and use your lips as buffers for your teeth in order to prevent damage to sensitive tissue.

2 Use tongue and mouth to tease the head of the penis, as you manually stroke the shaft of the penis and create firmer stimulation.

3 Move your mouth up and down the penis in a rhythmic motion. A steady rhythm builds and sustains excitement.

4 For enhanced pleasure tickle, fondle and squeeze the scrotum.

5 Allow your mouth to create a vacuum effect, alternating blowing and sucking. The stronger the sucking action on an erect penis, the more pleasurable the feelings produced.

6 Alternate sucking with licking and nibbling the head and shaft.

7 Flick your tongue rapidly around the head of the penis, the most sensitive part of the penis.

8 Stroke the shaft with one or both hands whilst sucking or licking the head.

9 As the penis hardens, gently squeeze the head and shaft of the penis.

10 Slowly graze the mouth against the penis as you continue to move your hand up and down his shaft.

11 Flick the frenulum (the place where the head of the penis connects to the shaft) with the tip of the tongue then circle the head of the penis slowly, stopping each time you touch his pleasure spot.

12 Humming whilst performing fellatio can cause vibrations which will create an added sensation for your spouse.

13 Tease the underside of the penis with flicking motions of your tongue or gentle sucking. The underside of the penis is very sensitive, especially on the line of skin that runs vertically up and connects at the ridge on the head of the penis.

14 Lightly tug on the testicles prior to climax to increase pleasure. The skin of the testicles is very thin and filled with many nerve endings.

15 Take your time and act as though you are enjoying performing fellatio as this will increase his sexual desire and happiness.

CHAPTER 16

Lovemaking Positions

Allah ﷻ says, *"Your women are fertile fields for you (ḥarthakum), so come to your fertile fields however you like."*[1003]

METAPHORICALLY, IN THE Qur'ān Allah describes women as their husband's fields, to convey the image of men as farmers sewing seed on their land. Acclaimed Muslim historian and Qur'ānic commentator Ibn Kathīr said in his exegesis of the Qur'ān regarding the *āyat*, "*Your women are fertile fields for you,*" that Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ said they (i.e. fields) are the place of pregnancy. Allah then said, *"so come to your fertile fields however you like"* meaning, whichever sexual position you desire, from the front or behind as long as penetration takes place in the vagina.[1004] Ash-Shinqīṭī says regarding the words, *"come to (fatū)"* that "it is an injunction to have sexual intercourse (*jimāʿ*). His saying, *'your fertile fields (ḥarthakum)'* is Allah making it obvious that the approach He is referring to is to the place of cultivation (*maḥall al-ḥarth*), i.e. the seed of a child which is the semen. This is the vagina (*qubul*) and not the anus (*dubur*). Because the anus is not the place of insemination for children as is well known."[1005]

CAUSE OF THE ĀYAT'S REVELATION

The *āyat* was revealed in response to existing cultural and social preferences regarding sexual activity. When the Muslims of Makkah emigrated to Madinah and intermarried there, they discovered various differences in cultural habits and preferences with regard to sexual intercourse. The people of Madinah were adventurous, whilst, in contrast, the women of Madinah women were more conservative in their sexual behaviour, leading to discussions as to what sexual positions were deemed acceptable. An-Nasā'ī and at-Tirmidhī reported that Nāfi ʿ said, "Ibn ʿUmar was once reciting the Qur'ān while I was with him and he reached the *āyat*, *"Your women are fertile fields for you (ḥarthakum), so come to your fertile fields however you like."* He said, "Nāfi ʿ! Do you know the story behind this *āyat*?" I said, "No." He said, "We men of Quraysh used to have sexual intercourse with our wives from behind [in the vagina]. When we migrated to Madinah and married some Anṣārī women, we wanted to do the same with them, but they disliked it and made a big issue out of it.[1006] One of these women disagreed and said to her husband, 'You will not do that until I go to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ [and ask him about this matter].' She went to Umm Salamah and told her the story. Umm Salamah said, 'Wait until the Messenger of Allah ﷺ comes.' When the Prophet ﷺ came, the Anṣārī woman was too shy to ask him, so she left. Umm Salamah then told the Prophet ﷺ the story and he said, 'Summon the Anṣārī woman.' She was summoned and he recited the *āyat* to her, *'Your women are fertile fields for you (ḥarthakum), so come to your fertile fields however you like.'* The Prophet ﷺ added, 'But only in the vagina.'"[1007]

[1003] Al-Baqarah 2: 223

[1004] Ibn Kathīr

[1005] Ash-Shinqīṭī, 2003, p. 62

Another reason given by Qur'ānic commentators for the revelation of the *āyat* was an incident that happened between the Muslims and Jews of Madinah. The women of Madinah had followed the practice of the Jews who used to have sex with their women on their sides. The Jews believed that a child born from a woman penetrated from behind would have a squint. Al-Bukhārī related that: Ibn al-Munkadir said that he heard Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh say that the Jews used to claim that if one has sex with their wife from behind [in the vagina] their offspring would become cross-eyed. Then Allah revealed the *āyat*, *"Your women are fertile fields for you (ḥarthakum), so come to your fertile fields however you like."* Ibn Jurayj said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, explaining this *āyat*, "From the front or from behind, as long as [penetration] occurs in the vagina (*farj*)."[1008]

An-Nafzāwī said, "There are many and various ways to make love. The Word of Allah tells us, *'Your women are fertile fields for you (ḥarthakum), so come to your fertile fields however you like.'* You may thus enjoy a woman in whatever position you please, as all are well known to be permissible, except in her rear end."[1009]

[1006] An-Nasā'ī

[1007] At-Tirmidhī said the *ḥadīth* is *ḥasan*.

[1008] Al-Bukhārī

The Sacred Law has left the matter for the husband and wife to explore and experiment with various positions as they wish.[1010] Men and women have different physical and psychological makeups and will have differing preferences for what excites them. Muslim erotologists relate a number of sex positions to help couples experience and enjoy the pleasures of sexual play. Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī mentioned over two hundred sex positions in *Nawādir al-ayk fī ma ʿrifah an-nayk.*[1011] The majority of the positions aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī related were derived from Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib's *Encyclopedia of Pleasure,* in the introduction to which he said, "To put an end to harmful drugs, the deception of some physicians, their exploitation of poverty-stricken people and the unwillingness with which drugs are taken, wise men wrote books in which they explained the way to perform well-conducted coition, arouse sexual desire and apply particular techniques which would lead to sexual satisfaction. It is also for acquainting people with the art of coition that they included in their books various sex positions and gave a particular name to each of them.

[1009] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, pp. 35-36. Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The Anṣār, who had been polytheists, lived with the Jews, who were People of the Book. The former viewed the latter as superior to them in knowledge, and used to follow their example in many things. The People of the Book would only make love to their wives from the side, this being the most modest way for the woman, and the Anṣār had followed their example in that. The men of Quraysh, on the other hand, used to expose their women in an uncomely manner. They took pleasure in them from the front, from the back, or laid out flat. When the Makkans came to Madinah at the time of the Hijrah, one of them married a woman of the Anṣār, and began doing that with her. She disapproved of it and told him, "We used only to be approached from the side, so do that or stay away from me!' This dispute became very serious until it reached the ears of the Prophet ﷺ. So Allah the Exalted revealed, "*Your women are fertile fields for you, so come to your fertile fields however you like.*" The Prophet ﷺ said about the *āyat*, "It is permissible to enter your wife's vagina from the rear or the front." al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

In the two *Ṣaḥīḥ* Books, there is from Jābir that, "The Jews used to say, 'When the man comes to his wife from behind, into her forepart, the child will be cross-eyed.' Then Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, revealed, '*Your women are fertile fields for you, so come to your fertile fields however you like.*'"

[1010] ʿAmr ibn al-Ahwas al-Jushami narrated, "I said, 'Messenger of Allah, how should we approach our wives and how should we leave them?' He replied, 'Approach your field tilth how you will, give her [i.e. your wife] food when you take food, clothe her when you clothe yourself, do not revile her face, and do not beat her.'" at-Tirmidhī

[1011] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, vol. 1, 2011, p. 173

Each author, however gave names which he thought would best apply to the sex positions he included in his book. However, all sex positions can be traced to the following five kinds: 1. The lying position, 2. The side position, 3. The sitting position, 4. The standing position, 5. The rear position."[1012]

Lying Positions

1 This is the conventional position in which the woman lies on her back and the man supports himself over her body on his hands and knees, bringing his thighs into contact with hers.

2 The woman lies on her back and the man lies over her, putting his thighs between hers. This position is called 'the particular position' because it is not widely known.

3 The woman lies on her back and the man bends himself between her legs. Then she rests her feet against his flanks and he pulls her buttocks towards him.

4 The woman lies on her back and the man bends himself between her thighs, putting his hands under her thighs and interlacing his fingers.

5 The woman lies on her back, resting one leg on the other. Then the man lies on top of her when penetrating.

6 The woman lies on her back and the man bends himself between her legs. Then she rests her feet against his chest, clasps her hands from behind his back and pulls him towards her so that her knees press against her chest.

7 The woman lies on her back, stretching one leg forward and raising the other up as best as she can. Then the man bends himself over her stretched leg.

8 The woman lies on her back and the man lets his hands go under her thighs and raises them up until he brings them into contact with her chest. Then he grabs her shoulders.

9 The woman lies on a low divan or chair, either face down with her knees on the ground or with her back on the seat, her feet on the ground and her buttocks resting on the angle of the chair; then he penetrates her.

1012 Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib makes mention of several stories involving the rear anal intercourse positions. As anal intercourse is prohibited in Islam, we shall not mention these, sufficient enough to mention is some of the rear vaginal intercourse positions. Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, p. 297

10 He lets the woman lie with her legs folded under her and places his knees one on either side of her so that her legs are between his thighs; then he penetrates her.

11 The woman lies on her back, then he positions himself between her thighs, places one of her legs over his shoulder, the other under his arm and penetrates her.

12 The woman lies upon her back and lifts her knees up to either side of her head, so that her buttocks are raised and her vagina protrudes; then he penetrates her. This position is suitable for the smaller penis.

13 He lets his wife lie on her back and raises her thighs, takes up a squatting position between them and penetrates her. This is a suitable position for the larger penis.

Side Positions

1 The woman lies on her right side and the man lies on his left side.

The woman lies on her right side, bringing her thighs into contact with her chest and the man lies on his left side.

2 The woman lies on her right side, raising up her left thigh and the man lies on his left side.

3 The woman lies on her side and he kneels between her thighs, places her top leg on his shoulder and the other between his thighs. She stays lying on her side as he penetrates her, at the same time hugging her to his breast and caressing her.

4 While both of them lie on their sides, he parts the woman's legs and penetrates her.

The Sitting Position

1 The man sits and stretches his legs forward. Then the woman sits astride his lap.

2 The woman sits on a stool with her back resting against a wall. Then she brings her thighs into contact with her belly, and the man introduces his penis into her vagina.

The Standing Position

1 The woman stands, resting her right foot on her other foot. The man opens her vagina with his hand and, introducing his penis into it, puts his hands on her shoulders.

2 The woman stands against a wall. The man raises one of her legs and introduces his penis into her vagina.

The Rear Position

The rear position refers to vaginal sex only, as anal intercourse is strictly prohibited in the Sacred Law.

1 The woman gets down on her elbows and knees and he penetrates her from behind. This is when the man enters the woman while she has her back to him.
2 The woman may also go on her hands and knees whilst the man kneels behind her.

Advanced Positions

1 The *asamdal* position is one in which the woman lies on her back, raises her buttocks by means of a pillow and brings her thighs against her chest as best she can. The man squats between her legs on his toes, puts his hands under her shoulders and seizes them. Then he introduces his penis through her vagina, pulling her towards him. Then he begins to make motions.

2 The frog-like position is one in which the woman lies on her back, raises her buttocks by means of a pillow and draws her thighs towards her belly in such a way as to let her heels touch her buttocks. The man squats between her legs on his toes, introduces his penis through her vagina, seizes her arms, pulls her towards him and begins to make motions.

3 The axe-like position is one in which the woman lies on one side and stretches her lower leg. The man squats himself down on it, raises her upper leg, rests it against his shoulder, introduces his penis through her vagina, seizes her shoulders or arms and begins to make motions.

4 The defeated position is one in which the man lies on his back and the woman sits astride his body facing him. Then she introduces his penis into her vagina, rests her hands on the bed and makes heaving motions. If the man is light, he will be able to help her by making similar motions. If, however, she wants to kiss him, she will have to rest her arms on the bed and lean over him.

5 The suffering position is one in which the woman lies on her back and separates her legs. The man kneels between her legs, raises them as well as her back off the bed un such a way that only her head and shoulders touch the bed. Then he penetrates her vagina

with his penis and seizes her buttocks so that he may be able to make motions. Meanwhile, the woman clasps her feet around his neck.

6 The bow and arrow position is one in which the woman lies on one side, and the man, with his face behind her back, goes breadth wise between her legs. Then he penetrates her vagina with his penis and seizes her shoulders from the rear. Meanwhile, she seizes his legs and pulls them towards her chest as best she can. Thus, he forms a bow and she forms an arrow.

7 The abdominal position is one in which both the man and the woman stand facing each other. The woman sets her legs apart to allow the man's legs between hers. The man penetrates her vagina with his penis, and they both clasp their fingers around each other's loins and begin to make motions.

8 The ram-like position is one in which the woman lies on all fours and the man kneels behind her. Then the man penetrates her vagina with his penis, seizes her shoulders and begins to make motions.

9 The rolling position is one in which the woman stoops so that she may rest her palms on the floor. Then she raises her buttocks and lowers her back and head as best she can. Then, seizing her thighs, the man copulates with her from the rear. If the woman remains in her stooping position after the man has withdrawn his penis from her vagina, her vagina will make a sound like snoring.

10 The driving away the sheep position is one in which the woman lies on all fours. Then the man stands behind her, raises her legs for her off the floor as high as his flanks and penetrates her vagina with his penis.[1013]

11 Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib said in *Enyclopedia of Pleasure*, "One of the most difficult positions practised in vaginal intercourse is one in which the woman puts two pillows under her buttocks and the man sits on her chest with his back turned toward her face. Then the woman seizes her feet and pulls them toward her head so that the man may copulate with her sitting between her legs. This position will show her vagina and enable the man to see her buttocks and anus while he copulates with her."[1014]

1013 Ibn Falīta, 1977, pp. 87-91

1014 Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, p. 304

Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib continues, "Erotologists say that the more you can bend a woman's legs towards her head, the deeper you can introduce your penis into her vagina. It is through this particular position that you can experience greater pleasure from coition and please her more."[1015]

What is the Best Position?

The 'man on top' (missionary) position is the one that many classical Muslim erotologists favour most, as it allows for deep penetration and good clitoral stimulation.

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said, "The best position for intercourse is for the man, after foreplay and kissing, to be on top of the woman, stretched over her. Thereby the woman is called a 'bed,' as the Prophet ﷺ said, 'The child belongs to the bed.' This is part of a man's complete guardianship of a woman, as the Most High said, '*Men have charge of (qawwāmūna ʿalā) women.*'[1016] And the Most High said, '*They are clothing for you and you for them.*'[1017] The most perfect and abundant clothing are of this kind, for the man's bedspread is clothing for him, and the woman's blanket is clothing for her."[1018]

The coitus positions that are most effective for stimulating the G-spot are:

- The rear position
- The women sitting on top position
- The man kneeling on top with the woman's legs over his shoulders

Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib said, "The best position is the one in which the woman lies on her back, raising her buttocks and head and the man lies on top of her."[1019]

Al-Jāḥiz related about Hubayy, a woman of Madīnah famous for advising men and women about sexual matters, that her son asked her, "Mum, how does a woman like a man to take her?" She said, "My boy, if she's an old lady like me, have her get down on her hands and knees with her face on the pillow and then slip it up her from behind. But is she's young, get her to lie back and lift up her thighs to her breasts. That's the best way for you too, son."[1020]

1015 Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, p. 296

1016 An-Nisā' 4: 34

1017 Al-Baqarah 2: 187

1018 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 1998, pp. 183-190

1019 Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, p. 305

1020 Al-Jāḥiẓ, 2002, p. 223

In another report al-Jāḥiẓ related, "The following exchange took place between two guests at the house of a jurist, 'Would it be a free woman or a slave that you have?' asked one. 'I have the mother of my children,'[1021] replied the other, indignantly. 'Why do you ask that?' 'A free woman has her own value,' he said, 'I simply wanted to tell you about a particularly good sexual position.' He said, 'So tell me.' 'When you get home, lie on your back and place a pillow underneath your legs for support. Then call the girl, and when your penis is erect, have her sit on it. Turn her around so that her back is towards you, lift up your feet and tell her to hold onto your big toes – like the preacher in the mosque holds onto his stick – and to bounce up and down to top. It's terrific!' When the man got home, he followed this advice and soon his maid was bouncing up and down on top of him. 'Oh, Sir!' she gasped, 'Who told you about this position?' 'So and so, the blind man,' he replied. 'May Allah give him his sight back, Sir! Oh, Sir!'"[1022]

The ancient Indian erotologists who gained a mastery of the art of lovemaking mentioned a number of sex positions which the Arab-Muslim erotologists also enumerated in their works. However, many Arab-Muslim erotologists thought that many of these positions were not pleasurable.

Ibn Falīta said, "The Indian erotologists mentioned many sex positions in their works but most of the positions they mentioned do not increase pleasure. In fact some of them are very difficult [in perform]. I think the [best and] most pleasurable sex position is one that combines kissing and cuddling. Human beings are the only creatures that kiss and cuddle each other. Kissing and cuddling is so pleasurable for some lovers that they prefer it to actual intercourse!"[1023]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī advises, "Assuredly the Indian writers have in their works described a great many ways of making love, but the majority of them do not yield enjoyment and give more pain than pleasure. That which is to be looked for in coition, the crowning point of it, is the enjoyment, the embrace, the kisses. This is the distinction between the coitus of men and that of animals. No one is indifferent to the enjoyment which proceeds from the difference between the sexes and man finds felicity in it.

[1021] The *umm walad* – mother of the children – is a slavegirl who has borne her master a child and thus has a special status. Neither she nor her child may be sold and they become automatically free on the death of the master.

[1022] Al-Jāḥiẓ, 2002, pp. 224-225

[1023] Ibn Falīta, 1977, pp. 81-82

"If the desire of love in man is aroused to its highest pitch, all the pleasure of coition becomes easy for him, and he satisfies his yearning in any way. It is well for the lover of coition to put all these matters to the test, so as to ascertain which position gives the greatest pleasure to both combatants. Then he will know which to choose for the tryst, both in satisfying his desires and retaining the woman's affection.

> "Many people have essayed all the positions I have described, but none has been as much approved of as the '[the] pounding on the spot [technique]'.
>
> "A story is told on this subject of a man who had a wife of incomparable beauty and grace. He used to explore her in the ordinary manner, never having recourse to any other. The woman experienced none of the pleasure that ought to accompany the act, and was consequently generally very moody after coition was over. The man complained about this to an old dame, who told him, 'Try different ways in uniting yourself to her, until you find the one which best satisfies her. Then work her in this fashion only, and her affection to you will know no limit.'
>
> "He then tried various manners of coition on his wife, and when he came to the one called '[the] pounding on the spot [technique] he saw her overcome by violent transports of love, and at the crisis of pleasure he felt her womb grasp his side energetically, and she said to him, biting his lips, 'This is the real way to make love!'
>
> "These demonstrations proved to the lover, in fact, that his mistress felt in that position the most lively pleasure, and he always thenceforward worked with her in that way. Thus he attained his end, and caused the woman to love him to folly.
>
> "Therefore try different manners, for every woman likes one in preference to all other for her pleasure. The majority of them have, however, a predilection for 'pounding on the spot', as, in the application of the same, belly is pressed to belly, mouth glued to mouth, and the action of the womb is rarely absent."[1024]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī concludes, "Such are the recommendations [of lovemaking] of the Most High to bring to its height an act so essential that it should never be a chore, but always a means of achieving happiness by making a woman happy. This is the secret of human happiness, permitted by Allah and even encouraged by Him, to whom we owe life and everything that embellishes it."[1025]

[1024] Sheikh Nefzaoui (translated by Richard Burton), 2010, pp. 66-67

[1025] Bouhdiba, 2004, p. 154

CHAPTER 17

Orgasm (*nashwah*)

"When a man makes love with his wife, he should strive to satisfy her."[1026]

AN ORGASM (*nashwah, hizzat al-jimāʿ*) is the climax of sexual excitement, characterised by intensely pleasurable feelings in the genitals and (in men) experienced as an accompaniment to ejaculation. Whilst an orgasm is relatively easy to attain for men, the female orgasm is a highly complicated emotional, mental and physical event. The average man requires only two to five minutes of stimulation to experience an orgasm, whereas, a woman requires on average twenty minutes of direct clitoral stimulation. Most women do not climax through penetration. For most women, manual and oral stimulation is better equipped to have a mind-blowing orgasm.

Female Orgasm

The female orgasm is an intense contraction of the pubococcygeus muscles (PC) and the pelvic floor muscles. The strengthening of the muscles increases blood flow to the genital area and enables women to experience a deep pleasurable sensation and a repeated series of pulses. Whilst the physical orgasmic process is the same, the actual orgasmic experience varies from woman to woman. Some women feel a mild tingle one time and an explosive full-body rush another. The subject of female sexuality is a recent phenomenon in the Western world. It was not until the twentieth century, when human sexuality became a legitimate subject for scientific study, that extensive research was carried out into female sexuality.[1027] Leading sexologist Beverly Whipple said, "Knowledge of sexuality and sexual techniques is more cultural than instinctive. Cultures less sexually repressive than our own [Western culture] celebrate the existence of female orgasm and teach their members methods of achieving it. In such cultures female orgasm is the expected state of affairs."[1028]

[1026] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153

A HUSBAND SHOULD SATISFY HIS WIFE

According to al-Ghazālī, it is from the Islamic sexual etiquettes for a husband to sexually satisfy his wife. Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī and Ibn Qudāmah were also of this opinion as were several other scholars. Ibn Qudāmah states, "If he was to climax before her, then it is disliked for him to withdraw before she achieves sexual climax, because of what Anas ibn Mālik related that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "When a man has sex with his wife, he should strive to satisfy her. Then when he fulfils his need, he should not hurry [in withdrawing] until she fulfils her need."[1029]

Traditional Muslim jurists spoke at length about female sexuality and argued that women have as much of a God-given right to orgasm as men in their marital relations. Al-Milibari, (d. 1579 CE), author of *al-Fatḥ al-Muʿīn*, a classical manual of Shāfiʿī jurisprudence, said the following about female sexuality and conjugal relations,

> "It is permissible for the husband to enjoy his wife in every way except for her anus, even if by sucking her clitoris or having her manually stimulating him to orgasm, but not by him manually stimulating himself with his hand, even if he fears fornication or adultery, contrary to [the opinion of the Imam] Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal]. It is impermissible to perform defloration with a finger.
>
> "It is recommended to fondle one's wife in order to increase intimacy, not to leave her more than four nights without intercourse without an excuse [such as menstruation], to seek out the pre-dawn hours for intercourse, to slow down so that she can experience orgasm if one's orgasm precedes hers, to have intercourse with her upon returning from travel, that both apply perfume for the embrace, that each of them say, even if they despair of having a child, 'In the name of Allah. O Allah, ward off the Devil from us and

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[1027] Ladas, 2005, p.1

[1028] Ladas, 2005, p. 41

[1029] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153, Al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 92 Recorded by Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī in his *Musnad*, 4201, and *al-Mugnī* by Ibn Qudāmah

> ward off the Devil from that which you provide us', and that they sleep together on a single spread (or mattress).
>
> "Using permissible medication to gain strength for lovemaking, with a noble aim such as chastity or procreation, is a means to something desirable, so it would appear to be desirable as well."

Al-Jāḥiz relates, "A man and woman had only been married for a short time before the husband brought the relative who gave her in marriage before the magistrate. He said, 'Your honour, this man married me to a lunatic.' 'Why do you think that she's mad?' asked the magistrate. 'When I screwed her, she came over all faint and I thought that she had died.' 'Get out of here, you idiot!" snapped the magistrate. "She deserves a better man than you. In Arabic, we call a woman like that *rabūkh*[1030].'"[1031]

And in another passage al-Jāḥiz relates, "Hubayy was one of the most amorous women in Madīnah. A group of the ladies of the town once paid her a visit. They said, 'My dear, we want to ask you about moaning during sex. Is it something that women have always done or is it a modern innovation?' 'Ladies,' replied Hubayy, 'I once made the lesser pilgrimage in the caravan of the Caliph ʿUthmān. On our way back from Makkah, at al-ʿArj, I looked at my husband and he looked at me; we both had the same itch and he mounted me. Now, just as the Caliph happened to be passing, I reached what we women reach and let out an enormous moan. The whole caravan – and there must have been at least five hundred camels – stampeded and, to this day, no two have been found together!' Hubayy, so it is said, taught the women of Madīnah all about moaning and 'sieving', i.e. rotating the hips during intercourse, as they call it there."[1032]

A Yoruba proverb has it that, "Whatever effort the penis might put forth, it is the vagina that reaps the reward,"[1033] meaning that a woman will benefit from a man who strives to satisfy her. Sex, as the West African proverb alludes to, is for both the man and woman to gain sexual gratification.

[1030] *Rabūkh* is a woman who swoons during sexual intercourse. *Aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ*, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*.

[1031] Al-Jāḥiẓ, 2002, pp.222-223

[1032] Al-Jāḥiẓ, 2002, p. 223

[1033] Owomoyela, 2005, p. 483

Female Ejaculation

Female ejaculation, also known as ‘squirting’ occurs when a woman expels clear fluid from the urethra during sexual intercourse. Female ejaculation was considered a myth in many premodern societies, as it is not common for women to ejaculate frequently. Ancient Greek philosophers Aristotle and Galen acknowledged the existence of female ejaculation and wrote about it in their works. Prior to John Perry and Beverly Whipple’s ground-breaking research, female ejaculation was assumed to be urinary incontinence.[1034] Muslim erotologists also debated the nature of female ejaculation after the Prophet ﷺ affirmed its reality in a tradition narrated by Umm Salamah, “Umm Sulaym came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, ‘Messenger of Allah, *Allah is not shy of the truth*.[1035] Does a woman have to perform purificatory bath *(ghusl)* if she has an [erotic] dream?’ The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Yes, if she sees water [i.e. nocturnal sexual discharge].’[1036] Umm Salamah covered her face [out of shyness] and asked, ‘Messenger of Allah ﷺ ! Does a woman have a discharge?’ He replied, ‘Yes, let your right hand be in dust! How does the son resemble his mother?’”[1037]

HOW CAN A WOMAN ACHIEVE AN EJACULATION?

Some women are able to ejaculate with ease, whilst others find it difficult. It has been said that a woman’s physical make-up, the strength of her pelvic floor muscles, her psychological mood and the skill of her sexual partner determine how easy or difficult it is for her to achieve an ejaculation. Whilst some women are able to ejaculate through clitoral stimulation, the most effective way for a woman to achieve an ejaculation to by stimulating the G-spot. This can be achieved by stimulating the G-Spot with the fingers, tongue or penis. A combination of G-spot stimulation and clitoral stimulation increases the chances of achieving female ejaculation.

To achieve female ejaculation by stimulating the G-Spot and clitoris at the same time, the couple should find a position (such as the man penetrating the woman from behind or the woman on top of the man) that offers the right stimulation of the G-Spot and deep penetration. The man should then build up pressure on the G-spot as he thrusts, whilst stimulating the woman's clitoris at the same time with his fingers. As the woman approaches and reaches orgasm, the woman should push out hard with her pelvic floor muscles rather than squeezing in. The combination of penile penetration and finger penetration will help relax the female genital organs to achieve her ejaculation. In addition to mastering sexual techniques, it is particularly important for the man to be patient and attentive towards his wife's needs so that she is able to relax and let go of her inhibitions in order to experience and enjoy the pleasure of ejaculation.

[1034] Ladas, 2005, pp. xvi – xviii

[1035] Al-Aḥzāb 33:53

[1036] Al-Bukhārī; Muslim; at-Tirmidhī; an-Nasā’ī; and Ibn Mājah

[1037] *“Let your right hand be in dust”* is an Arabic expression you say to a person when you contradict his statement meaning “you will not achieve goodness.” al-Bukhārī

Types of Female Orgasm

Women are capable of experiencing several types of orgasm: clitoral, vaginal, or a combination of the two. Some women can also experience a G-spot, nipple or mental orgasm.[1038] Misplaced prudishness and, all too often, male laziness have been cited by erotologists as the main reasons that many women have not experienced the various joys of climax. Thus, it is incumbent upon men to try their utmost to help their wives achieve physical ecstasy as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ advised.[1039]

Ibn Falīta said, "A woman likes to marry a man who is capable of delaying ejaculation to a certain extent so that she may be able to achieve an orgasm. But if the man delays his ejaculation to an extent which does not coincide with the woman's desire, she would get bored and would begin to hate him. This is especially true of women who quickly reach orgasm."[1040]

Muḥammad an-Nafzāwī said, "It is said that when you wish to make love, lay your wife upon her back and hold her tight and squeeze her. Kiss her on the lips; kiss and caress her neck, breasts and thighs; lick, nibble and suck her as well. Turn her around, roll her over and continue to kiss and caress her until you see she has become relaxed and aroused. Then penetrate her. Foreplay arouses a woman; if you neglect it, she will neither feel sufficient desire nor will she reach her climax."[1041]

Signs that a woman has reached the acme of sexual pleasure include:

[1038] Sigmund Freud made the pronouncement that the 'mature' woman has orgasms only when her vagina, but not her clitoris, is stimulated – this is commonly referred to as the 'vaginal orgasm'. Some sexologists have reported that women can have upto eleven types of orgasms.

[1039] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153, Al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 92 Recorded by Abū Ya'lā al-Mawṣilī in his *Musnad*, 4201, and *al-Mugnī* by Ibn Qudāmah

[1040] Ibn Falīta, 1977, p. 32

[1041] An-Nafzāwī, 1999, p. 34

- Abdominal muscle contractions
- Body shaking
- Clutching of the hand
- Deep breathing
- Engorged clitoris
- Facial grimace
- Female ejaculation
- Involuntary muscle spasms
- Increase in size of the Inner labia
- Lip biting
- Moaning, screaming and loud vocalisations
- Rapid and spastic hip movements
- Rhythmic contractions in the lower abdomen
- Rolling of the eyes
- Taut hardened nipples
- Toe-curling
- Vaginal palpitations[1042]
- Unusual facial expressions

WHY DO WOMEN FAKE ORGASMS?

Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood explains, "Many women do this [i.e, fake orgasms] because they are too shy to explain to a husband that he is doing something wrong. They do not want to hurt his feelings, or damage his self-respect. However, if a woman is never properly satisfied she will become frustrated and neurotic, and may be forced into unnecessary practice of masturbation in shameful secrecy."[1043]Unfortunately an increasingly large number of women, both married and unmarried, resort to masturbation to have an orgasm due to sexual frustration.

VIBRATORS AND DILDOS

A vibrator is a device used for massage or sexual stimulation. A dildo is an object shaped like an erect penis used for sexual stimulation. These two sexual devices (sex toys) have become increasingly popular over the past few years amongst married and single women alike. Whilst such devices bring obvious benefit in attaining physical climax to their users, sexologists such as Virginia Johnson (of Masters and Johnson) have warned of their potential psychological harms. Johnson wrote, "Women who use the vibrator over a long period of time often report that they have lost much of their capacity for sexual thoughts, fantasies or daydreams. They feel that a great deal of the richness has disappeared from the ideas, thoughts, words, and gestures that once held such a special erotic and emotional meanings for them."[1044]

[1042] Vaginal palpitations are contractions that occur inside the vagina during high levels of arousal

[1043] Maqsood, 2009, p. 158

Although, vibrator-induced orgasms may quickly solve the problem of climaxing, they actually create a whole new problem of dissatisfaction. From her research, Johnson found out that regular use of vibrators may even cause depression, "Over a long period of time, if a woman uses intense mechanical means to short-circuit her appreciation of the various stages of build-up to her release of sexual tension, it can diminish her ultimate joy. She may be left with a great yearning, a sense of restlessness or even depression."[1045]

ANORGASMIA

Anorgasmia is the inability to reach orgasm during sexual intercourse. It is a type of sexual dysfunction commonly found amongst women, though some men also experience regular difficulty in reaching orgasm after ample sexual stimulation. Anorgasmia can often cause frustration and personal distress. Despite this, anorgasmia can be treated and people can enjoy fulfilling sexual relations.

There are four types of female anorgasmia:

1. Primary anorgasmia: a woman has never been able to reach an orgasm by any means.
2. Secondary anorgasmia: an orgasm was experienced at some point in the past but now the woman has difficulties reaching climax.
3. General anorgasmia: The inability to experience an orgasm in any situation.
4. Situational anorgasmia: An orgasm may be experienced in certain sexual situations, such as by oral stimulation, but not others, such as actual intercourse.

Secondary and situational anogasmia are common amongst women, as most women do not consistently have orgasms with every sexual encounter. Therefore it is important for the man to be patient and flexible with his spouse during the lovemaking process, so that she can attain climax.

[1044] Juffer, 1998, p. 88

[1045] Juffer, 1998, p. 89

THE IMPORTANCE OF EJACULATION AND ORGASM

A lack of ejaculation and orgasm can cause great sexual frustration and physical discomfort as well as causing great strain on an individual's psychological state. Indeed there is much truth in the popular saying, 'an orgasm a day, keeps the doctor away.' An orgasm is a natural medicine for both the body and mind because it lowers and relieves stress, releases tension and can even reduce pain. A condition affecting some men in particular due to a lack of ejaculation and orgasm is epididymal hypertension. Colloquially referred to as 'blue balls,' epididymal hypertension is the condition of testicular aching that occurs after extended sexual activity without ejaculation or orgasm. The condition is generally caused by unsatisfied and prolonged sexual arousal without release.

During sexual arousal in the male, blood flows into the groin. This results in dilation of blood vessels and an erection. The veins carrying blood away from the region constrict and help keep blood present, allowing the erection to persist. This phenomenon, termed vasocongestion, also occurs in the testicles. The size of the testicles can increase by 25-50% during sexual arousal. The lack of orgasm allows this congestion to persist and is felt as an ache or pain in the testicles. Discomfort arising from fluid and blood congestion in the testicles and prostate region can range from mild to excruciating pain in the genital region. Women can also experience some form of discomfort due to lack of orgasm and ejaculation during prolonged periods of sexual arousal and sexual dissatisfaction. Pelvic congestion or 'blue vulva' results in the experience of discomfort due to the unreleased vasocongestion in the pelvis and lower abdomen area. Vulva, uterus and ovaries swell with blood during this period, which can cause a feeling of heaviness and aching similar to that men experience with epididymal hypertension.

The pain of epididymal hypertension usually does not last long, and is often minor unless there has been prolonged sexual stimulation without ejaculation or orgasm. Ejaculation results in a decrease in vasocongestion and the blood then moves from the groin area. Ejaculation can be attained by oral or manual stimulation by one's partner as well as penetrative intercourse. Orgasm and ejaculation are not only the most effective remedies for the pain of epididymal hypertension and pelvic congestion; they are undoubtedly the most pleasurable.

Multiple Orgasms

There are two types of multiple orgasms, sequential orgasms, which are a series of orgasms that are two to ten minutes apart, and serial orgasms, which come one after the other in rapid succession. Recent studies by modern sexologists have shown that some women are able to experience multiple orgasms. Rachel Carlton Abrams, MD, co-author of *The Multi-Orgasmic Woman* said, "The average woman is built to come again and again."

Unlike men, women do not require a refractory period to have an additional orgasm, so they are able to stay aroused for a longer period and have multiple orgasms consecutively with little effort. Many classical erotologists were of the opinion that women had a greater capacity for sexual enjoyment, as Ibn Falīta says, "Women like coition so immensely that they always think of it. Men, for their part, like coition but, compared with women, their sexual desire is far less intense."

Ibn Falīta related, "A man proposed to a woman asking her, 'What do you think of an honourable but poor husband who has such sexual activity that he would achieve an orgasm three successive times without interrupting intercourse and would wash himself both in the morning and in the evening?' No sooner had he finished his words than she said to him to let no woman hear what he had said and then she married him."[1046]

TIPS TO ATTAIN MULTIPLE ORGASMS

1 Sexercises – It has been demonstrated that strong pubococcygeus (PC) muscles are a crucial contribution towards having multiple orgasms.

2 Direct pressure on top of the clitoris is usually too intense for women, so focus on stroking around the sides, at the speed she finds pleasurable.

3 Train the mind (for the man) – Concentrate by thinking of something that will not arouse you in order to delay ejaculation. Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib said, "To delay ejaculation, a man should think of things that are irrelevant to coition such as, pain, imprisonment and the like."[1047]

4 Train the mind (for the woman) - Becoming a multi-orgasmic woman has a lot to do with a woman's mindset. Many women do not allow themselves to get fully aroused, which is a problem as

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[1046] Ibn Falīta, 2006, p. 22

[1047] Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, 1977, p. 322

arousal is what fuels multiple orgasms. When a woman feels relaxed, is at ease, and is comfortable in her surroundings, these factors will help mentally prepare her to experience the joys of multiple orgasms.

5 After the woman has had her first orgasm, the man should manually stimulate the clitoris and other erogenous zones with his fingers or tongue, to enable her to climax again. It is better to stimulate the clitoris through manual or oral stimulation because it is not only more pleasurable, but it is easier for her to achieve another orgasm.

6 Switch stimulation - If the woman has climaxed via clitoral simulation, the husband should then proceed to stimulate the vagina or G-spot, as it will provide her with a different type of sensation and can help produce another orgasm in the same sexual session. Also, if she climaxed through intercourse, the husband should proceed to manual or oral stimulation. The variety of stimulation will subconsciously encourage her to orgasm again.

7 Take Her to the Brink - Taking a woman to the brink of orgasm without letting her climax is one of the best ways you can get your spouse to experience a truly intense and pleasurable orgasm that she will not forget. The man must be disciplined to do this properly, especially because your wife might become frustrated and restless. As she is just about to climax, you should stop stimulating her. This will prevent her from coming. You should then take her to the brink of climax at least four times before you allow her to orgasm in full. The built up sexual tension will result in a shuddering burst of pleasure and often lead to her being able to orgasm again quickly thereafter.

Simultaneous Orgasm

Simultaneous orgasm occurs when both partners climax at the same time. It is one of the most exhilarating experiences a couple can enjoy, and Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib said that simultaneous orgasm is the ultimate prize in the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure*. According to Ibn Nāṣir al-Kātib, it will guarantee "everlasting love." Advising his readers how to achieve this goal, the author recommended; plenty of French-kissing, cunnilingus, postcoital conversation and cuddling. These are all signs of civilised and healthy lovemaking.[1048]

[1048] El Feki, 2014, *Sex and the Citadel*, p. 54

Al-Ghazālī mentioned simultaneous orgasm in his explanation of the following Prophetic tradition, "Three things are weaknesses in a man: meeting someone who wants to know him, but letting him go before learning his name and ancestry; secondly, rejecting the honour someone wishes to pay him; thirdly, approaching his concubine or his wife and taking her without first talking to her, caressing her and lying by her side, so that he uses her to satisfy his need before she satisfies her need through him."[1049]

Commenting on this tradition, al-Ghazālī said, "When the husband has attained his desired end, let him attend patiently to his mate, until she also reaches her climax. It often happens that her orgasm is delayed, which further excites her passion; to withdraw from her at this point would cause her pain. The physical discrepancy in the matter of orgasm may cause mutual estrangement whenever the husband is too quick to ejaculate; simultaneity in the moment of orgasm is more delightful to her. The husband should not be preoccupied with his own satisfaction, because the woman will often be shy."[1050]

Al-Jāḥiz, at-Tifāshī and other erotologists transmitted a tradition on simultaneous orgasm from the legendary female figure known as The Thousander *(alfiyyah)*.[1051] A group of women gathered to visit her and asked her, "Sister, tell us what is required and we will do it. What is it that makes women settle in men's hearts, what gives them pleasure and what morals do they abhor? What should we do in order to arouse their love and affection?" She replied, "The first thing is that the look of a man should fall on a body that is healthy, not smelly but fragrant, in which case [the woman's] beauty will be enhanced." They asked, "What does a man have to do in order to capture a woman's heart?" "He should be playful prior to coitus and shudder before ejaculation *(firāgh)*." They asked, "What is the reason for mutual love and concord [between a man and a woman]?" She said, "Their simultaneous orgasm."[1052]

It has been said that women are beautifully complex and men are handsomely simple.

ADVICE FOR MEN

Every woman needs different types of stimulation to attain sexual climax. A woman has to feel comfortable, and the man has to understand what arouses her sexually. Some women love kisses, but other women find saliva a total turnoff. Some women love lots of stimulation of the breast, but other women can't stand it at all. Some women love to be on top, but others love the missionary style. Some women respond to intense clitoral stimulation, but others require very little of it. Some women have an innate capacity to experience multiple orgasms but others do not. It is the man's duty to understand what pleases her. Good sex is about the connection the couple have with each other. It's about working together. Some women like rough and crazy sex, but others like it to be gentle and sweet. Many women, though, like all sorts of ways of sex, and the preferences can change depending on their moods. The man should take pride in ensuring that he has satisfied his woman's desires as the Prophet ﷺ instructed, "When a man has sex with his wife, he should strive to satisfy her."[1053]

[1049] Al-Ghazali, 2007, p. 74

[1050] Al-Ghazali, 2007, p. 75

[1051] In reference to the number of men she was reported to have had intercourse with.

[1052] Newman, 2014, p. 34; Also related by at-Tifashi and al-Jāḥiẓ.

TIPS TO ATTAIN SIMULTANEOUS ORGASM;

1 Learn how to interpret each other's physical responses, so you can sense how close you both are to coming.

2 The man should perform cunnilingus to bring his wife near to climax, then he should insert his penis into the vagina, making rapid thrusts so that they achieve climax together.

3 Synchronised breathing can also help to attain a synchronised finish.

4 Communicate with each other. Learn how to interpret each other's sexual responses and let your partner know what pleases you sexually.

5 Come up with your own personal code for letting your partner know how close you are to orgasm.

6 Become familiar with your pre-orgasmic sensations in order to delay ejaculation until your spouse is ready to climax with you.

7 In order to attain the most pleasurable of climaxes you must work in union with your spouse and be extremely patient during love-making. It is, after all, well worth the wait.

It is well said that patience can be bitter, but her fruit is always sweet.

[1053] Aṣ-Ṣuyūṭī, 2011, vol. 1, p. 153, Al-Kawthari, 2008, p. 92 Recorded by Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī in his *Musnad*, 4201, and *al-Mugnī* by Ibn Qudāmah

CONCLUSION

Superiority of the Love of Allah

Allah ﷻ says in His Noble Book, "*And Allah's good pleasure is even greater. That is the great victory.*"[1054]

WHILST SEXUAL LOVE is laudable, it is not the highest form of love a human being should strive for, as the following *āyat* makes clear, "*Say: 'If your fathers or your sons or your brothers or your wives or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any house which pleases you, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and doing* jihād *in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His command. Allah does not guide people who are deviators.'*"[1055]

Love of Allah is the highest degree of love that a human being can attain and is one which every God-conscious individual should strive for. A human being should not love their spouse more than their Creator. Love amongst human beings is conditional, unlike the unconditional love that a believer should have for Allah. The Prophet ﷺ was the best example of a man who loved his wives dearly but did not allow his love for them to cause him to neglect fulfilling his duties towards his Lord. ʿĀ'ishah reported that the Prophet ﷺ was like any man at home, undertaking domestic chores and helping around the house, but when the time for prayer came he would immediately get up and prepare himself for prayer. Indeed love of one's spouse is a great blessing but the love of Allah is even greater, "The love of desirable things is made alluring for men - women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high, horses with fine markings, livestock, and farmland - these may be the joys of this life, but God has the best place to return to. Say, 'Would you like me to tell you of things that are better than all of these? Their Lord will give those who are mindful of Allah Gardens graced with flowing streams where they will stay with pure spouses and Allah's good pleasure - Allah is fully aware of His servants."[1056]

[1054] At-Tawbah 9: 72

[1055] At-Tawbah 9: 24

And Allah, the Exalted, be most praised; only He knows fully what is correct and true. He is the beginning and the end, from whom all things proceed, and to whom all return. May His peace and blessings be upon His last and final Messenger, Muḥammad the son of ʿAbdullāh. ◆

[1056] Āl ʿImrān 3: 14-15

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The Prophet ﷺ said, "He who has not thanked people has not thanked Allah."[1057]

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[1057] Al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-īmān,* and Ibn Abi'd-Dunyā narrating from an-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr. Aḥmad and at-Tirmidhī from Abū Hurayrah. Ad-Daylamī from Jābir. Al-Khaṭīb and Ibn ʿAsākir from Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ.

"O Allah I complain to You of my weakness, my lack of means, and my insignificance in other people's sight. O Most Merciful, You who are the Lord of the weak and You who are my Lord. To whom will you entrust me? To people far away who will abuse me? Or to my enemies whom You have given power over me? As long as You are not angry with me, I do not mind. But Your good pleasure is my hope and my desire. I seek refuge in the light of Your Noble Face, by which all darkness is dispelled and everything in this world and the Next put in its rightful place, from Your anger descending on me or Your wrath alighting on me. You have the right to reprove until Your good pleasure is complete. There is no power and no strength except in You."[1058]

[1058] Ibn Hishām, *as-Sīrah an-Nabawiyyah*. (translated by Abdalhaqq Bewley from "The Prophet ﷺ as Ruler", MFAS Journal Volume 1, Number 1, May 2015).

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